Surviving in a Video Game

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Summary: So you know how those other SIs go. Person gets dropped into another universe yada yada. Some of them are lucky and they get some kind of power boost or maybe even they've had past experiences that help them in the new world. Myself, on the other hand, am not that lucky. I'm dropped into the world of Fire Emblem: Awakening with nothing more than my head to help me survive.

Chapter 1: Into the Unknown

So another self insert coming from me. Real shocker there right? Anyways, unlike my FFVII one this one is a true blue self insert. I'm not holding any punches with this one. The main character of this fic is me inside and out. Not even going to hide it so there. Fake name of course. Not going to go giving that info out. It is a different fake one than my other fic though so that I don't go mixing the two up.

Well, let's not listen to me ramble. Here's that there first chapter.

Italics will be my character's thoughts and /\WWWW\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Into the Unknown

Ugh. My college work is finally over. Well, not exactly over so much as now I can have a break from it.

It's about time that I can finally be able to lay myself down and not have to worry about anything.

Climbing into my bed, I stretched slightly before plopping my head onto my pillows.

Most people say my bed is to stiff and that they can't understand how I manage to sleep in it. I say that my bed is perfectly fine the way it is. Its length is just right for my height of five foot seven. Not to mention that I never have a problem with finding a nice sleeping position on it. Also, the stiffness of the bed goes completely unnoticed by me. All I say is that it's better than sleeping on the floor.

Not feeling quite up to fall asleep just yet, but still wanting to relax in bed, I adjust my position until I'm lying flat on my back.

In a loss for what I should be doing, I run my hand through my brown hair. I noticed that it's getting long again and wonder if I should go for another hair cut during the weekend. I haven't let my hair get long ever since I had let it grow for an entire year. Instead, I was going for a different style. Normally cut all around, hair flat on the back of my head, and then the front is standing up. It's not something I'd usually do, but I figure why the fuck not?

Might as well think of something to do right? At least if I don't come up with anything then I'll just be able to pass out in the comforts of my bed. So there's always trying to get the lazy bastards of friends that I have to do something. Nah, I'm too lazy for that. Well, there's always work the parents might want me to do. Actually, they haven't told me to do anything today so I guess I'm free from that. Maybe I could do some work on the various fanfictions I have going. I don't really having anything in mind so that can't be a possibility. I'll definitely jot something down if it comes to me.

Should I maybe just play something on my 3ds in the meantime? There's always Fire Emblem Awakening. No, no, no. This sounds like a cheesy opening to a self-insert fanfiction. Not that I haven't done one, it's just that the whole start playing a game because I have nothing else to do sounds like the cliché that's everywhere. Next thing I know, I'm going to find my face getting sucked into one of the 3ds screens.

No, sleep sounds like the best thing to do. My lazy ass deserves it after all the damn college work I've been put through.

Just going to close my eyes and enjoy the peaceful feeling of sleep. Here's to not having any funky dreams. The last one was a doozy and I don't plan on going through that again.

Slowly, I find myself nodding off in the comforts of my room. Within minutes, I'm out cold.

/\WWWW\

Ugh. Is it morning already? There's a direct stream of sunlight shining in on my face from a window so I'll take that as a yes.

In an attempt to loosen myself up, I stretched in my bed and let out a loud yawn. My hands rubbed out the sleep in my eyes and I sat myself up in my bed. That's about when things starting looking weird.

First of all, I shouldn't have been woken up by sunlight at all. I keep my blinds in my room closed all the time so no amount of sun should've touched me. Instead, this window was being only partially blocked by some long red curtains. A slight crack in them was allowing the shining sun to penetrate through.

Things only get weirder. The room I'm in is hardly what I'd call my room. See, I usually have a rather messed up room. Clothes would be scattered about carelessly along with my schoolwork. It's what most people would probably call a room for a slob. This one, however, was kept neat and tidy. Not a single thing was out of place in the entire room.

On top of that, there was an extra bed in here. Nobody was in it, but that doesn't change the fact that there were two beds. Two twin sized beds that looked a lot like straw mattresses.

How in the world did I manage to sleep on this crap? Oh wait, my bed is probably just as stiff as this stuff.

Hold on! I shouldn't be questioning how I slept on this crap! I should be wondering how the hell I got in this bed! Not to mention why I'm in an entirely different room than my own!

Are those candles on the nightstands? And this room is far beyond modern architecture. There's no dry wall anywhere in here. It's either stone or something else. I'm not too keen on architecture. That doesn't change the fact that this room is not normal!

W-Wait. What. Am. I. Wearing? I'm definitely not wearing my old clothes that's for sure. Nor are they anywhere near what I'd consider normal attire.

I'm guessing I'm wearing some kind of gray leather pants? What's with this red shirt? It feels loose but it also feels like it's sticking to me. Ah, that's why. I'm wearing a belt I guess, and somebody tucked in my weird red shirt?! Pull this out now!

What's this on my back? Do not tell. It is. It's a fucking dark grey cape. Give me this. If anything, this cape is getting wrapped around my waist instead. I'd rather look like I'm trying to cover my ass than impersonate a bad superhero.

And of course it wouldn't end there right? I would have a stupid white bandana wrapped around my forehead. Take this crap off. I'd rather use it as a handkerchief than wear it. Pocket it for later.

Ok, assess the situation. Either I've been kidnapped by some cruddy renaissance fair people or this is a sick prank being made by some shit head friends. No matter which one it is, I'll be happy to get the hell out of this crap.

Better to find a way out of this hell hole before I go crazier. I'll just head out the door and get out of here. Huh, I guess I'm upstairs. Well, I'm going to head down the stairs and then I'll get out of here!

Going down the stairs led me to something strange. There was a bald man in medieval style clothing as well. He seemed to be behind a bar cleaning a couple of glass mugs. Behind him were barrels as well. Across from the bar were a few tables that were completely devoid of people and utensils.

The middle aged man looked at me after hearing my footsteps. He gives me an odd look and asked, "Excuse me, sir. Exactly what were you doing up there? I don't quite remember renting out one of my rooms."

Dear god. Don't tell me he's in on it too.

Feeling rather upset at being forced to participate in this, I proceed with my original plan of getting the fuck out of here. As I walk away, I hear the barkeep start to almost shout, "Hey! Where do you think you're heading?! I'm not done talkin'!"

Before he gets more enraged at my lack of a reply, I decided to humor the guy. I waved back as I walked away and said in a sarcastic tone, "Don't worry, my good sir. I'll get right onto paying whatever I owe as soon as I get a hold of my pouch of gold."

I exited the door to his made up establishment, and here him shout in a rage, "Stop! Damnit. I'm going to grab the city guards!"

As I exited onto the streets, the barkeep started to sprint down one direction of the street. I might've kept thinking he was crazy if I wasn't so left in awe.

They. They built an entire town? There are so many people. The street is being covered with a bit more people than I would imagine anybody could get to do any stupid fair or prank for that matter.

I can't be. No, no. I shouldn't be! There can't be any way this is possible!

Out of confusion, I started to briskly walk down the street in a similar fashion to the barkeep. Except, I wasn't running nor did I want to find any guards. No, I wanted to find my way out of this place.

Please just let me know that I've been kidnapped by Amish people!

My brisk pace soon started into a full blown sprint as I realized just how far the town stretched.

Horse carriages? Market stands? Even water wheels in the river? No, no. This has to be a damn dream. It must be!

After running for who knows how long, I stop to take a breather. I then slap myself and get a few odd looks from the people around me.

This can't be right. I can't be in some kind of medieval world. There's just no possible way for that to happen right? It must be a dream. It just must.

With my confusion seemingly not ending, I'm left to stand in the middle of the street of this town as other villagers pass me by. Some ask if I need aid. Others point and whisper thoughts of my insanity. These all vanish, however, when a multitude of screams and shouts are heard in the distance.

The people around me and I looked in the direction of the source. Shortly after, a couple of panicking villagers came running down the street. One stumbled in her attempt of running and falls quickly to the ground. A rather tough looking individual came to the woman's aid and helped her to her feet.

The man has a rough beard and an even rougher face. It almost makes one wonder how he managed to have such soft looking blue eyes for the rough exterior he donned on the outside. His muscles are far from what one would call normal. It doesn't help that he apparently has them on display considering his white leather vest. He could easily out bench press me anytime of the day considering my twig arms. There's also what appears to be a short sword strapped to the man's back in some kind of leather sheath. He definitely means business.

"What is going on?" the tough individual asked the panicking woman.

"The church! The church! There's bandits at the church! They murdered the guards and are ransacking the village! They're murdering people!" the woman with brown hair shouted out quickly.

Surely enough, the woman's story is far from not believable. Every person in the vicinity that heard her looked in what I'd presume is the direction of the church and there's smoke rising in the air. Also, the amount of running people probably means they aren't handing out pumpkin pie over there.

Of course this news doesn't bode well with the townspeople. Most individuals drop what they're doing and run in the immediate opposite direction of the smoke. Others grab their children to assist them in the getaway. Some crazy minded individuals run back towards the now burning church shouting things about having to help.

The burly man is no different. He rubbed his hand through his short black hair and then gritted his teeth.

"Damn brutes. Have they no dignity?!" the man yelled as he draws his short sword.

He started to head for the church when he passed by me. He stopped and looked at me for a moment as if he was expecting me to react to have a different reaction to all of this. All I can think of doing is to get the hell out of here, but the entire situation is just too strange. It's not every day you're in a burning village. How the hell would I know how to react?!

"Well, are you just gonna stand there with your head up your ass or are you going to help these poor people?!" He asks in anger.

His voice broke my stupor and I attempt to answer him as best as I can but words escaped me.

He let out a disgruntled grunt before he yelled to me, "Get your ass moving before I move it out of here for ya!"

The burly man then started back in his sprint for the church with his short sword at the ready.

There was hardly time for me to come to a decision. My gut was telling me to run away. It was the smartest idea. I have no kind on how to use a weapon. Why the hell would I go to defend others when I can't even defend myself? The thing is, however, that thought really pissed me off. How can I just stand here and give out excuses like that? Those people over there didn't ask to be attacked. If I was in there situation right now, I would want anybody to help me. Regardless of how well armed they were. Any kind of help is help.

Feeling stupid and incredibly mad, I clenched my fists and decided I'd give it a shot.

I may be about to get myself killed but I might be able to save someone else in the process. This kind of stuff isn't my cup of tea, but, then again, I don't think it's anybody's cup of tea in the first place. Heroes are just forced to drink the crap to get it done with. If there's nobody to drink the crappy tea, then we're left with no heroes. So give me that bloody cup so that I

can chug it because my idiocy has taken over.

In an idiotic move for the future wellbeing of my life, I started to run down the road in the direction of the burning church. The sounds of people's scream continue to fill the air as I try to block them out.

I'm coming to save you so how about you shut up! There's no need to make me start second guessing myself!

Quickly, the screams get louder as I near the source. Buildings around me are also on fire so that's a good sign that I'm on the right track.

Thanks burning buildings. No, wait. Burning buildings is a bad sign. Don't thank the burning buildings.

I get closer and closer to the area of shit as the church slowly comes into my view. Before I can get any closer, however, I noticed the burly man from before hiding behind a building with his sword at the ready. He heard my footsteps and turned to look at me as I came running towards him. Before I can continue to run any further, he motioned for me to stop and come to him. I do just as I'm told and ducked behind the smoldering building with him.

He gave me a strange grin as he said, "So you came anyway. Good man."

Being the out of shape person that I am, in my out of breath state I replied to him, "Yeah, well. It didn't bode well in my head leaving people to die."

He continued to grin at me as he sized me up. He then peaked around the buildings corner again before looking back to me.

He said in a nervous tone still grinning, "Well, can't say you'll do much good here. Maybe you should've bolted when you had the chance."

Thanks. That's really nice knowing that I'm essentially useless and that I should've just saved my hide instead of doing this stupid crap.

He noticed my dejected look I had donned and gripped my shoulder. The guy mustn't know his own strength or I'm just extremely fragile because this kind of hurts. The man then said, "Don't worry, kid. If you don't want to do it, then I can handle these chumps. Besides, if you leave then that just means a bigger reward for me!"

The bearded man let out a small laugh before I brushed his hand off.

"Don't go calling me a kid. I'm eighteen, pal. Also, if you could handle these guys so well, then how come you're hiding?" I asked with a questioning glare.

He stopped his small laugh as he gave me a sheepish grin. He then rubbed his head while he said, "So ya noticed huh? I'm not going to lie, kid. There's a lot of them. I'm not too worried about besting one or two of them in a fight but that's where I draw the line of my skills. It's not looking up for us."

"Is there anybody else that's going to help us? I saw a whole load of other people running this way!" I said in a shocked tone.

We can't be the only ones, can we? There's a good ten or more of them out there! Me and beard man can't take that on!

"Afraid not, kid. I saw the number of people heading this way as well. Either they got lost or they ducked out at the last minute," the burly man replied with a frown.

"What about the guard? I heard this town had one!" I said trying to think of any help.

"See that over there?" the man asked while pointing around the corner. He pointed off to a pile of five or so bodies piled up next to the church. They were bodies of men that were fairly well armored. It was the guards of this town.

"That's what happened to the guards. They might've cut down these guys numbers a little but they were in the same situation as you and I," the man said with an even deeper frown.

"That's it? That's how big the guard was?" I asked myself quietly.

The man heard my whispers and gave me another strange smile. He then answered, "That's actually a rather large guard for a town this size."

His smile then shrank again as he looked back to the group of bandits. His face formed a scowl as he said, "That,

however, is an oddly sized group of bandits. Far too large for what I've seen around these parts. Plegian by the looks of it."

Please don't tell me he said what I think he did. I'm going to pretend like he didn't and just continue on with the immediate problem we're facing. The fact that both of us will probably die if we try to fight.

"T-Then we should get out of here! We stand no chance!" I said in fear.

I knew this idea was stupid! Somewhere in my head I convinced myself that I could do this. That I could be a stupid hero. How wrong was I? This isn't some dream! This is real fucking life! I'll get my insides ripped out if I try to fight these guys!

The man with the beard looked at me puzzled. He then responded with, "And leave the town to them? I don't think so. This town is a favorite resting spot of mine. Like hell I'll let these guys tear it up."

"Then what are you doing hiding?! They're just going to kill more people why you hide, you know!" I said in anger.

"I'm strategizin' here. Running in head first will only get you killed," the man retorted back.

Just then, a scream of pain came from the church again. Both the bearded man and I looked around the corner to see what was happening. Of course, there was one of the bandits kicking a man on the ground. The bandit was laughing joyfully as the middle aged man clutched his gut.

It was hard to discern, but I could recognize the man on the ground. It was the barkeep.

No, no. He's a tavern owner not a barkeep. The tavern owner from before that was angry at me. He must've run into these guys while looking for the now deceased guards.

The bandit picked up the tavern owner and held him up by the collar of the man's shirt. He punched the tavern owner in the side before throwing him to the side while laughing maniacally.

My friend, the beard man, noticed how I was looking at the scene. He asked me, "You know that man?"

"Y-Yeah, he was the tavern owner of the one I stayed at. The one that I didn't pay for," I replied quietly.

The burly man with me then looked back at the barbarians as he asked, "What's your name, kid?"

"I'm not a kid! And what's with the sudden interest in names?! If we die here, then our names aren't going to matter or anything!" I shouted in protest.

"I like to know the names of people I might be fighting beside. It shows trust. Trust that will aid us on the battlefield. My name's Auden," he said before gripping his short sword with both of his hands.

Seriously? This guy's serious? He's fucking serious?!

"Now or never, kid. It's either your name or I'm going in solo, " he said while getting ready to make a run for the closest bandit.

Well, I only have two options, don't I? It's either I abandon Auden that's been kind enough to converse with me in this hectic scene, or I humor him by giving him my name and try to keep both of us alive somehow.

To hell with it. If he's going to try, then I'm not backing out now. Maybe this will be a good way to repay that tavern owner for my lack of rent payment.

I wonder how well my name will fit in this medieval style place. Especially if it's where I think it is. Ah, fuck it. Fake names are overrated anyways.

"My name's Vincent. Since we might die here, I'll let you call me Vince just this once," I said before standing behind Auden. The guy's pretty tall so I have to look around him to see what's in front of him.

"Thanks for being so kind, Vince. How about we teach these scoundrels why they shouldn't mess with Southtown!" Auden yelled as he went straight into the fray.

My lord. It really is what I think it is. I'm stuck in fucking Fire Emblem: Awakening. This is just my damn luck. Where the bloody hell is Chrom then!? Fuck it! I've got to help Auden!

Auden charged forward with decent speed and took a Plegian bandit completely by surprise. He slashed his sword right

through the Plegian's chest killing the poor bastard almost instantly. This guy wasn't kidding about being good.

His attack isn't received kindly, however, as two of the bandits ahead of us take notice and come charging forward. Auden merely smirked in response.

The bandits were off sync in there charge and Auden took advantage of it. As one of them came into attack him on his left, he sidestepped to the right dodging the attack. He then continues his steps into a spinning cut that slices directly into the bandit charging on his right. The Plegian bandit let out a few gurgles as he coughed up blood before he slumped to the ground.

The guy's a damn badass!

"Vince, watch out!" Auden shouted to me.

I stopped admiring his handy work as I notice the bandit he dodged is instead coming after me now! He's aiming to decapitate me with his axe!

Uh. Uh. D-Dodge!

By the skin of my teeth, I manage to duck under the bandits attack. It wasn't a good dodge though. I stumbled in my dodge and barely made it behind the guy. In an attempt to get as far away from the bandit as possible, I continued as far as I could in my stumble before I had to stop and recover my posture. We were a good ten or so feet away from each other now.

Auden's already dealing with two other bandits so there's no way I can assist him. No, I should be worried about myself right now. This guy's going to kill me if I don't do something about it!

"Hey, come over here. I'm going to fucking kill you!" the Plegian bandit said in a gruff voice.

"What?" I asked in disbelief.

"No, I'm not coming over there," I replied back.

"Fine. Stay where you are then. I'm going to come over there and chop off your fucking head!" the Plegian bandit said before coming towards me again.

Not having anything else to possibly try, I turned around and started running. Sure enough, the bandit was giving chase.

There was enough open area around the church that I could run unimpeded. Also, the bandit wasn't as fast as I thought he might've been. I could totally out run him. This was my best idea as I couldn't see any other way of dealing with this guy.

Quickly, I realized that I'm just running in circles with this guy as I notice Auden still fighting two bandits. He seemed to be having a bit more trouble with those two then the others. The element of surprise was no longer on his side and now it was up to his skill t dispatch of the bandits.

Strangely enough, I figured we'd be getting swarmed.

Where are the rest of the bandits at? There was at least another five or so of them by my count. The only one left is the one in front of the church. He looked like the bandits leader which is what I'd equate to this chapter's boss.

Damnit! Where the hell is Chrom and the stupid Shepherds!? Never mind that! I need to find a weapon! I can't run forever! Hell, I'm still exhausted from all the other running I've been doing! At this point, adrenaline is what's keeping me alive.

Have to find a weapon. W-Wait! What about one of those guys Auden already killed? One of them have to have a weapon!

I made a quick b-line for one of the dead bodies and searched for a weapon. There was in fact a weapon on the bandit's body! It was just a giant axe is all.

No problem right? I can lift that. What is this? Iron? I got this.

Ok this is a bit heavier than I expected. What is this? Twenty pounds? How weak am I? Note to self; start working out if you make it out of here alive. Crap. The bandit is getting closer to me! Ok, just lift up the nice axe so that it can protect you from the bad man.

I managed to lift up the axe as the bandit chasing me closed in. When he got close enough, he brought his axe down towards me in an overhead swing.

That shit will split my head open! Dodge!

I sidestep the attack but not in time. The axe gets dropped right in my left shoulder and it cuts deep. I can almost feel myself losing motor capability in my left arm. Not to mention that I can feel all the excruciating pain running through my body right now.

I let out a scream of pain as the bandit laughs maniacally in my face. Auden heard my scream and looked back to me because of it.

"Vince!" Auden shouted in concern.

My pain, however, was only a distraction for Auden as one of the bandits he was fighting gets a swing with his sword on him. The attack hit Auden's arm but he quickly recovers and retaliates with a strike of his own.

Focus. You're the one in trouble, not Auden.

With my axe still being held in both of my hands and slumped down to my right side, I will myself to us whatever strength I have left. In a desperate attempt of survival, I swing my axe in an upward arc for the bandit in front of me.

The bandit was a little too lost in the enjoyment of my pain to notice this, however, and gets struck directly in the left side of his chest with my axe. I lose my grip on it with my left hand, and my axe gets effectively stuck in him.

The shock of pain caused him to jerk his own axe out of me extremely quickly. The sudden removal of it sprays out my blood into the air. It's a sight that I can barely stomach.

The bandit continued to shout out in pain as he yelled, "Fucking bastard! You piece of crap! I'm going to really kill you now!"

Good to know we were only pretending before.

He raised his axe up into the air again to go for the killing blow. His windup of the attack was slower than expected. Maybe it's because of my axe still being lodged in him. The pain might be hampering his ability to effectively move. I know his attack has left me fucked up.

I know that his attack is going to kill me. The thing is, I don't want to die. Dying isn't something I exactly look forward to. It's just that there isn't anything I can do. I'm trying to get my axe out of him or at least to cause enough pain to him for him to stop, but I can't manage to get it to budge. Wait. I'm fucking stupid. Dodge!

I let go of my axe and gripped onto my left arm with my right hand as I jump to the right. The bandits axe misses me entirely and he ends up hitting the ground instead.

Man, Piccolo would be pretty disappointed in me if he was my mentor. Always. Fucking. Dodge.

"Damn you! Hold fucking-" the bandit was cut off abruptly as a bolt of lightning struck his back.

He stood motionless for a few seconds before falling lifeless to the ground. Behind him stood a man with white hair kept just above his eyes. He wore a black cloak that concealed most of his body. In one of their hands they held a book as lightning sparked around the other the individual had pointed at me. Also, he had a sword held in a sheath on his side.

"There's wounded over here, Lissa!" the cloaked man yelled back to a blonde girl with pigtails.

"Right! I'm coming right away!" Lissa shouted in response to the cloaked man as she ran over with some kind of staff.

Thank sweet buttery Jesus. It's the damn Avatar and the others. I don't. I don't know if I could go on any longer than that. Blood just doesn't. Sit well. With me.

In a sudden moment, I collapsed to my knees and regurgitated whatever I had left in my gut. It wasn't a pretty sight, but neither was the one I was currently dealing with. Blood, dead bodies, and the still present battle of death happening around me. It's nothing something a modern day guy like me can take easily.

I wonder if I might've dealt with this better if I joined the military like those recruiters always wanted me to do. No, I'd probably just be a better runner by now. I'd still be in boot camp considering my age.

The Avatar saw my poor state of health and rushed in front of me to defend against any oncoming attackers. At about the same time, Lissa made it too, and started to heal my wounds with the power from her staff I'd assume.

The wound on my shoulder started to seal up and let me say that this only seemed to cause more pain. I shifted my left arm slightly while the process went on, but that only seemed to upset Lissa.

"No, no. Don't move. You have to keep still if you want this to go easy," she said with a frown.

I merely nodded in response and held my left arm in place with my other arm. As my wound was almost completely healed, I looked over to where Auden was again. My concern for his wellbeing was surprisingly high. I had only just met the guy, but I felt like it would be my fault if he was injured.

Without a doubt, Auden was still locked in swordplay with the two bandits. His attacks were getting slower as were the bandits. Both of the parties were wounded for sure. For Auden, it appeared that his left arm had a cut running the entire length of it. Blood seemed to be pouring directly out of his wound leaving a trail of where his fight has led him.

He has been fighting two bandits for a few minutes now. One axe wielder, and another sword wielder.

I wonder if the game's triangle works here. If that's so, then he should be equal with the sword wielder and have an advantage over the axe swinger. Of course, I don't recall enemies being able to pair up in the game so maybe I should throw that idea out the door.

The axe swinger came in for an attack at the same time as his sword wielding friend. His axe swung down while his friend went in for a thrusting attack. Auden didn't falter. He stood in the vicinity of their attacks and braced himself. This had me worried. He was either giving up, or he wanted to take their attacks head on.

Worried for what could become of Auden, I looked for the Avatar to see if he could provide assistance. Sadly, he was already preoccupied with keeping me and Lissa protected from another bandit. The two were engaged in a heated sword fight. My pleas of help would only get him injured.

My own wound had then sealed completely leaving only a scratch on my left shoulder. That was when Lissa looked to see where she might be needed.

Damnit, Auden. The fuck are you doing!?

Sure enough, the axe and sword neared his body. He was definitely going to get hit. Just as the axe was going to hit him, however, something surprising happened. Or at least, surprising to me. Auden parried the axe with his own sword and quickly sliced the axe bandit across his chest. The bandit was killed in no time flat. This didn't change the fact that there was still a sword gunning right for him. As Auden was recovering from his last swing, the bandit's sword stabbed him right through his leather vest and into his gut.

"Auden!" I shouted in fear.

The fight Auden was just in had grown quiet. The two individuals stood there in silence as the bandit held his sword deep in Auden's stomach. Auden stood motionless as he let his sword slump to his right side.

He can't be dead. No, no. This isn't on classic is it? Damnit! This isn't a fucking game! Nor is it a goddamn dream! Stop thinking that! Auden's... fucking… dead.

Tears welled up in my eyes strangely enough. I tried to wipe them away but they just came back. Even Lissa was left breathless as she watched the scene. I'm sure she wanted to go heal him right away, but there's still that bandit right next to him. She would be getting herself killed.

The Avatar finished of his bandit in a quick swing and noticed what had happened. He wasn't pleased either. He went immediately to go and assist Auden, but there was hardly a point to it. Auden was already dead.

Fucking hell. I can't believe I'm getting teary over this guy I just met. Maybe it was his personality. He just seemed like that old guy who pretended he was still young. Damn bastard was laughing this whole situation off as if it didn't faze him. He knew he'd die. He fucking knew it.

As I mourned over the assured loss of Auden, his voice broke the silence around us as it echoed, "Tch… You're going to have to… do better than that… to finish me off!"

Both Lissa and I's eyes widened as we heard the battle cry Auden made. The Avatar stopped motionless in his tracks as he stared in disbelief at what was happening. Auden's previously motionless body was moving again. He lifted his left

hand up and gripped onto the bandit's swords blade. The edge of the blade cut into his bare hand but he didn't let it go. He kept the blade firmly emplaced in his stomach as he stared the bandit down in front of him.

"Can't let you… outdo me… while these kids are watching me!" Auden shouted into the bandit's face.

The bandit tried desperately to get his sword out of Auden, but he couldn't do it. Auden was determined to keep it in him. In a quick turn of events, Auden rose up his own short sword in his other hand and brought it down into the bandit's neck. The strike left the bandit gurgling up blood as he stumbled backwards gripping his neck. In another few seconds, the bandit would collapse to the floor lifeless.

Auden then pulled the bandit's sword out of him and threw it to the side. He stood in a pool of his own blood as he looked around. The cocky bastard gave me a grin and a thumb up with his left hand. He then fell backwards onto his back taking in sharp breaths.

Not taking another second look, Lissa, the Avatar, and I rushed to his side. The very first thing Lissa started doing was casting a heal on Auden. All the while, Auden smiled as his wounds slowly closed.

When we reached his side, two others ran next to us.

One of which was on an armored horse carrying a spear. He had short brown hair and a serious look glued to his face. It was indefinitely Frederick.

The other was a reserved man with blue hair. He left his right arm exposed to reveal that he had the Mark of the Exalt on it. No doubt the sword he carried is the Falchion which would make him Chrom.

The first thing Chrom did was go to the Avatar for an assessment of the situation.

"What's going on, Robin?" Chrom asked the avatar who has the default name of Robin.

"This man was injured in the fight. Him and this other man took a brunt of the forces while we dealt with the ones that attacked us. We probably would've hit more resistance if it weren't for them," Robin said as he looked at Auden with concern.

As we gathered around Auden, the bandit leader yelled out, "Rotten sheep learn your place in the food chain! Come to me! Face your butcher!"

"Lissa, I know I can trust you," Chrom said to his sister.

"I'll do my best," Lissa answered with pure confidence.

Chrom looked to Robin and Frederick before he headed off to face the bandit leader with them. Sounds of their attacks clashing resonated through the air.

Lissa and I, in the meantime, were left to take care of Auden.

"H-Hey, kid." Auden said in sharp breaths.

Lissa shushed Auden as she said, "You need to conserve your energy. You've lost a lot of… blood."

Auden laughed or maybe coughed with a smile. It's hard to tell. Either way he said to Lissa, "Sorry, I've got to tell the kid something before I… go."

"Don't talk like you're about to die, Auden. You're going to be just fine. So stop calling me kid, would ya?" I said as I tried to reassure him of his position.

Auden snickered in response as he said, "No, my time's up… and I wanted to tell you something before I go."

He motioned for me to lean in closer so that I could hear him in his current state. He then said quietly, "You did good out there, Vince. Don't beat yourself up over this kind of stuff. If the world beats you up and you beat yourself up too, then you'll only end up living a shorter life than me."

"W-What are you saying?! I got hit with an axe and I hit a guy with an axe. That's it! I did nothing! You're the one that-" I was cut off by Auden shaking his head in disapproval at my ramblings.

"You tried and that's all that matters. Now… try and stop being such… a kid," Auden said as his eyes slowly closed. His head slumped to the side as his wound in his gut fully closed.

I-Is he really dead? He is.

I let out a sigh of displeasure as I cracked a nervous smile.

Damn old cook wanted to call me a kid at the very end, eh? What a piece of crap. But I won't forget you Auden. You'll always be that damn beard man in my mind. Nobody else will ever-

As I was silently saying my goodbyes in my head, Lissa let out a huff as she started to pout.

Not exactly the way I thought she'd take this. Kind of was expecting that scene when her sister- Whoa! What's she going to do!?

Lissa balled up one of her hands into a ball and raised it up high over Auden's deceased body. She then brought it down like a hammer, hitting Auden straight in his patched up gut. When she did so, Auden shot up to a sitting position coughing.

"Ow! You know it's pretty rude to punch people, right?" Auden sheepishly said as he looked at the angry Lissa. To try and dissuade some of the pain caused from the hit, he rubbed his stomach with one of his hands.

Lissa turned her head still pouting and said, "Well, it's even ruder to pretend you've died to your friend!"

He's not dead? He's not dead. He'll wish he was.

Taking notice of my scowl Auden tried to calm me down as he said, "Oh hey, Vince. Funny seeing you in the afterlife. I told you that you'd live a shorter life if you-"

"Payback. I will pay you back for this you old bastard!" I cut Auden off as I threw a punch for his face. He didn't dodge but instead tried to block the attack.

I stopped midway in my punch as I said calmly, "Later though. I'm too tired to try kicking an old guy's ass."

Auden blinked a few times in confusion while Lissa did the same thing. He lowered his hand as he nervously rubbed the back of his head and said, "Yeah, well I think I'll take you up on that offer. I'm feeling a little tired as well and like my ass the way it is now."

I smirked at Auden's response and he let out a hearty laugh. Lissa looked at us in confusion as she said, "You two are the weirdest of people."

Auden's laughter increased in volume as I decided to join in on his enjoyment. It was cut short, however, as he coughed a few times. Probably from the injuries he's sustained.

Just then, Chrom, Frederick, and Robin walked back to us with the bandit's dead body lying on the ground behind them.

Robin smiled as he observed that there were no other bandits left standing, "Finally. I thought we'd never see the end of those brigands."

Chrom let out a sigh of exhaustion and then smiled as he looked to the rest of us. He then said, "It was a well fought battle. My friends and I are in debt to your help. May we have the pleasure of knowing your names?"

"Pardon me, milord. I don't feel it wise for us to be conversing with such individuals. We have no knowledge of their background. They could very well be spies," Frederick said expressing his paranoia of new comers as he does oh so often.

Chrom raised a hand to calm Frederick as he said, "Peace, Frederick. These two risked their lives for the townspeople. That's enough to tell me that they aren't such."

"But of course, milord," Frederick said almost sounding defeated.

"Never thought I'd be saved by Shepherds. Guess I really have lived a long life," Auden said while lying back down on the ground.

Chrom looked at Auden with curiosity. He then asked, "You know who we are?"

Auden lifted up his hand and pointed directly at Chrom's right arm. He then said, "The mark, milord. It's a rather dead giveaway of you being Chrom. I've seen you and your older sister the Exalt in Ylisse during a few of my stops through there."

"Then I'm glad to know that introductions will be easy for you. May I know your name, stranger?" Chrom asked with a smile.

"It's Auden, milord," Auden answered quietly.

Chrom shook his head in disapproval as he said, "Just Chrom will do fine. No need for formalities between allies on the battlefield."

"What about you? What's your name?" Robin asked me.

"Name's Vincent. No need in giving me any gratitude. I didn't do much. This guy's the one that took on a small squad," I answered while pointing at the exhausted Auden.

"Don't let the kid go fooling ya. He was a major help," Auden said with a slight smirk.

You bastard.

"Well, it's good to hear that there are people like yourselves. I don't wish to be a bother but we can discuss more after we take care of the… fires," Chrom said while nervously looking at a building crumbling from the fire it was being consumed by.

Right, the game didn't bother explaining what occurred after the fight with the burning village. It simply cut to the village after it was saved.

"Any able body can assist in the dousing of this fire. Do not feel obligated, however. We will have this fire taken care of in no time," Chrom said to the remaining villagers and I'd assume me and Auden as well.

While Frederick and Robin went out to find more buckets, Chrom and a few other villagers went straight to throwing buckets of water on the burning buildings. They made constant runs back and forth between the river and any house that was on fire.

Lissa and I were left sitting next to Auden when Lissa looked at me with a grin.

"Well? Go out there and see how your arm's doing!" Lissa said while nudging me with her arm.

Oh yeah. Send me out there to work. Well, I shouldn't complain. She did save Auden and probably me too. Might as well do something about this fire.

"Right, and if it doesn't work, I'll be sure to let you know," I replied back with a smirk.

Lissa pouted a little as she said, "I don't mess up when fixing people, alright?"

"Right, right," I said as I walked towards an empty bucket.

I then grabbed the bucket and went to work throwing water onto the raging fires.

God. Why couldn't there be a fucking water tome in the game? This would be so much fucking easier if there was. No, instead there's only wind, fire, thunder, and dark. How counterproductive.

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"It's… done," I collapsed with an empty bucket still in hand as I made it back to the others. Even Robin was completely exhausted as he appeared to be doing the same thing I was currently doing. Lying face first on the ground with an empty bucket in hand.

The fires were finally put out and the village was thankfully partially saved.

"That's good to hear. Now, I'd like to ask you and-" Chrom was cut off quickly by the sound of an angry man shouting.

The mad man was a bald one and he came storming towards us as he shouted, "You!"

Damnit tavern owner! Can't you see I'm too tired to be yelled at?!

Nonetheless, the tavern owner came bolting towards our group and stopped suddenly in front of the prone me. He looked down at me with daggers in his eyes.

"P-Pardon me, sir. Who are you?" Chrom tried to ask the enraged bald man standing only a few feet away from me.

"I'm the owner of the tavern that this slime ball decided to stay for free!" the tavern owner shouted while keeping his dagger eyes locked on me.

"Look, I'm a little winded here. So, if we could handle this at a later date, that would be great," I said while trying to push myself up to my feet. I managed to get up and was forced into a staring contest with the bald individual.

In a sudden turn of events, the tavern owner shoved something into my chest. It was an iron sword being held in a red sheath. I looked at the sword and then back to the bald man a few times. It was clear he was giving it to me despite the scowl he had on his face.

I took the sword out of his hands and asked, "You're giving this to me? I don't get it. Don't you hate my guts or something?"

"I do you crap for brain idiot! But that doesn't mean I want to see your guts spilled around town," the tavern owner said before starting to walk away from our group.

He stopped in his tracks as he turned around again. He continued to hold a scowl on his face as he said, "Try not to do anything stupid again. And if you'd all like we're having a small feast in my tavern. You're all welcome to attend."

Lissa perked up the sound of a feast and even Robin got up from his prone resting spot. The thought of food and relaxation might sound too good to them.

Chrom, Frederick, and Auden instead stayed calm. Chrom smiled as he responded with, "Sorry, but we cannot attend. We're making way for the capitol as soon as possible."

Lissa pouted at her brother for rejecting the villager's offer but didn't argue surprisingly. Maybe she knows what her brother will say already.

The tavern owner, nodded at Chrom's answer and started to walk away again. He was a good distance away but I could still hear him as he muttered, "Stupid kids these days. Running into a fight without a sword. The hell was he thinking? The next generation had better be better."

"Chrom, why'd you do that?! I really wanted to go to that feast," Lissa said in a pout to her brother.

Ah, there's the Lissa from the games. Figured she wouldn't remain quiet for long.

Chrom laughed softly at his sister's reactions and said, "There isn't the time to be enjoying a home cooked meal. We have plenty of ground to cover before we make it back to the capitol. Besides," Chrom leaned in closer to his sister and nudged her, "I thought you could get used to all of this."

Lissa crossed her arms in response to her brother's teasing and looked away from him. She then said with a pout, "You know, sometimes I wonder how we're related."

The rest of the group all snickered at the response Lissa gave and I even found myself joining in.

The laughter died down as Frederick approached Chrom and asked, "We should be heading out now, milord. Are you going to ask them now?"

Chrom seemed to remember something as he said in surprise, "Oh, you're right, Frederick! I had almost forgotten!"

He then turned to face both me and Auden. He kept his hands to his sides as he said, "After watching your valiant efforts today I could only hope you two would join the Shepherds. Would you kindly join us?"

Auden was quick to respond as he said, "No thanks, Chrom."

This shocked the entire group. Even I found myself a little bewildered. Not that I thought he would join the shepherds. It's just that he was so quick to refuse.

This caught Chrom completely off guard as he lost his calm outward appearance. Even Frederick was showing signs of confusion.

"M-Might I know why you don't wish to join?" Chrom asked Auden.

"Well, let me first say that I've been doing things a certain way. It's a little engraved in my head. I can't just stop doing what

I do so suddenly. No hard feelings, right?" Auden said with a grin.

Chrom regained his composure at Auden's answer and responded with, "None at all. It's entirely understandable. Don't let me change your way of life."

Auden continued to grin as he then said, "Then if that's all I'll be heading out now. I've been lying around in this town for a little longer than planned anyways. Maybe I'll catch you all at the capitol."

He started to turn around as he placed a hand on my shoulder. Again, either I'm weak or this guy is a brute because this isn't pleasant. He then said to me quietly, "Better to join them so that you don't look like such a kid the next time we meet."

Auden calling me kid was about to bring a scowl to my face but I hid it with an awkwardly formed smile as he released me from his grip.

He then continued in his walk away from us. Before he was completely out of earshot range, he shouted back, "Maybe I'll take you up on that offer on a later date, Chrom."

The group smiled at Auden's departure and held a moment of silence as we watched him walk away.

Meet again, eh? Sounds like fun beard man.

"So, how about you?" Chrom asked breaking the silence.

"Me?" I asked while pointing at myself, "You can't be talking about me."

"There's no one else around I could be asking this so yes I'd think I am talking to you." Chrom said in an almost slight laugh.

Join the Shepherds, huh? Doesn't sound like a bad life. Maybe I could learn a thing or two with joining them. Actually, wait! Not a bad life? Hello? These guys fight bloody wars! I'd be dead in the next chapter!

Now, that I'm thinking about it, if this was essentially the prologue, I'll be it altered slightly, then the next thing to happen would be chapter one, right? What was that chapter? I've played the game a few times so this should be common enough knowledge for me. It's… Uh… Fucking Risen! Hell, no! No, no! Triple no! I am not fighting those corpses!

B-But I'd gladly take the shepherds up on their offer. I just don't see myself traveling with them through that mess to get to the stupid capitol. Wait. What if I just get to the capitol before them and join them at their HQ? I could avoid the shit storm they're going to hit and make it safely past the next chapter while I figure out what's going on.

"Can I take a rain check?" I asked with a thoughtful expression.

The group looked at me in confusion. Lissa then broke the confusion as she said, "Oh, you must still want to travel with your friend, right?"

Oh naïve Lissa. You are very very naïve. Either way that doesn't sound too bad of an idea. I could always use a body guard. Especially one that's as good as Auden.

"Y-Yeah, that's it. Look, we'll head for the capitol and meet you there. I'll join you guys after that. Deal?" I asked while extending my hand for a hand shake.

Chrom was the one to accept my hand as he gripped it tightly with his own. He then replied, "That sounds good, Vincent."

Chrom and I release each other's hands from our hand shake with an understanding smile across both of our faces. I continued to hold my new iron sword in my right hand as I waved good bye with my left. Then, I went down the street that Auden walked down. It wasn't hard to find the giant. I easily spotted him out of the crowd of other townspeople.

"Auden," I shouted out his name to grab his attention.

He turned around with a doubtful look and saw me. While looking back down the road we both came down, he asked, "What're you doing following me? I told you that you'd be better off with them."

"Ah, shut it. And here I thought you'd enjoy my presence. I'm going to travel with you for a little while. You heading for the capitol?" I asked while I started to strap my sword's sheath around my waist.

"Well, yeah. But I don't think a kid like you should-" Auden tried to argue but I stopped him.

"Kid? Cut the crap. It's Vince to you and don't try me again with this kid stuff," I said with a hint of a growl.

Auden continued to not move as I still walked down the street. I noticed him being stopped and looked back to him before calling back to him, "Well? You going to let me lead the way or are you?"

Auden then let out a hearty laugh that stunned a few villagers around him. He made a brisk walk to my side and slapped me a few times on the back.

The guy puts body builders from my world to shame I swear.

"Ah, couldn't resist following me, eh? What're you after, huh?" Auden asked while he continued to pat me as we walked.

"What am I after? I saw a guy cut down four brigands and figured he could do the same on the road. That's what I'm after," I answered.

"Ah ha! You're after my skills! How would you like to be my student? I'll be your teacher and you'll be my student! I can see it now! Vince, the great successor of the spectacular Auden!" he said with a hint of stars in his eyes.

Is this guy for real? What did I just get myself in? Think I can go find Robin and the others still? No, I'm stuck with beard man.

"Listen, can you just focus on directions? I don't want to get lost because you think I'm your student or something," I said wanting him to hurry up.

"Ah, I see. You want secret training. Secret training that you never know you've learned until the last second when a brigand is going to strike out and end your life!" Auden shouted out in joy.

This is going to be a painfully long walk.

Well, how was it? Leave a review on what you think.

Before I go over other stuff I'd like to say that I'm going to attempt a strict schedule of a chapter once a week. I can't promise they'll all be roughly ten thousand words but I can attempt to promise that there will be at least one every week. Gotta work on that discipline.

So everyone noticed my OC Auden right? Honestly I didn't plan on making him, but when starting up the raid on the village I figured there would have to be at least one brave soul in there. I found myself thinking of him as Gregor almost half the time as I'm sure half of you did too.

Another thing I didn't plan out was me going with Auden. Things just have a strange way of happening. I hope we can all enjoy the company of beard man.

I'd hope you guys appreciate me straying away from the game's script. I did my best to not copy it and this is what resulted. I'd like to never use it if that's a possibility.

I'm sure somebody's going to ask it so I'll answer first. This isn't a lunatic plus mode or anything. Some of you might be weirded out by this after reading the fight scene of roughly the same number of people. I'll be it that I split it up with more of them going after the Shepherds but I digress. I'm merely going to throw however many people I see fit at the heroes. If this means a small army will appear in chapter five or something then that's what is going to appear. Maybe even just a small group of Plegian bandits will be a chapter's fight. It depends on what I do.

Anyhow, I'm sure everyone noticed me dropping a couple of references here and there. Point them out if you spotted them. One's pretty obvious.

So leave a review and I'll hopefully get back to you next Saturday!

Chapter 2: A Dream?

So this is obviously not Saturday but I had finished this chapter and was wondering if perhaps you readers would like me to go by the schedule or to simply upload them when they're finished. If nobody really gives their input on this subject, I suppose I'll go with the schedule uploading; which could potentially not happen this week considering I've uploaded this earlier than planned.

In other news, I'm glad that I haven't done something horribly wrong yet; and that people are enjoying this so far. My biggest surprise has to be how well Auden is being received so far. I made dear old beard man on a whim and had planned to never see him again for a good while. Glad to see I made a good choice on keeping him around.

Just had to ask that question and get my happiness out of the way. I'll stop getting in the way of the chapter's start now.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

A Dream?

"There was another time where I was locked into deadly combat with a bear. Nothing more than my bare hands left to protect me from the feral beast," Auden said as we continued to walk along a designated path.

The path was one that Auden explained would lead us to the capitol. Not that there really was a path. It was just him looking at a map, and then looking around as he said, "Yup, this is the path!"

I feel that I'll be questioning his intelligence fairly shortly when we end up in Plegia somehow.

In the meantime, I've been forced to listen to him ramble on about his past adventures. Or dreams he has had of what he may believe to be past adventures. No matter which one they are, I don't believe them in the slightest.

I swear he is just talking to hear himself talk.

In other news, I've been trying to come up with a reason for being stuck in this death zone I once called a video game.

Dream? This would have to be the most vivid and uncontrollable lucid dream I've ever had if that was the case, and I've only ever had one other lucid dream too. Spent that one turning people into animals. It was well worth it.

Ok, maybe it's not a dream. So what else could be happening? Did my 3ds screens really suck me into them by chance? I… I don't even want to try and think about that.

So dream and 3ds kidnapping are out of the question. Maybe… Just maybe… I've become a chosen one for some God to make the right choices in leading the people of this world into a bright future.

Me? A chosen one? A God chose me. And I haven't even gotten a fucking diploma in college. Well, I guess I graduated high school so I must be a bit more qualified to be some chosen one than that guy in that Tool song. Then again I don't feel that good about relating myself to the guy in that song. Here's to not waking up from a coma and going insane.

Seriously, this all sounds pretty damn stupid. Whatever the reason is, I'll just be glad to find out what the fuck it is.

"I then locked the bear in a deadly headlock. Needless to say, he wasn't happy. Oh ho. He thrashed about, but he could hardly get away from me!" Auden continued in his story that I was hardly paying attention to. My hearing was fading in and out of the conversation as I was trying to discern my current situation of being trapped in a fictional world. When I actually listened to his story, I just wanted to pick and prod at the little details of his story.

"And you're sure this bear attacked you?" I asked being slightly exhausted.

"Huh? What are you talking about? Of course it attacked me! Weren't you listening?" Auden asked in slight shock.

"Yeah, I've been listening and I don't know how believable your story is. Where I'm from, bears aren't really that aggressive unless they feel threatened," I replied not really thinking of the potential differences between bears from my world and this one.

"Well, this one was different! He jumped out of the bushes while I was setting up camp!" Auden said.

"And what's with it being a he? Maybe it was a she. That'd make more sense. She might've thought you'd hurt her cubs or something," I continued in the nitpicking of his story.

"Boy, you sure know how to kill a good story," Auden said as he rubbed the back of his head while we walked, "Haven't you ever told a story before?"

"Not about personal experiences. Besides, nobody would listen to one of my experiences even if I had any," I answered.

"Of course they would," Auden answered joyfully, "Hell, you could tell one about today. And it doesn't hurt to stretch the truth a little, you know?"

"So you're saying I should just leave out the part where I did nothing," I said back to him.

"Well…" Auden sheepishly grinned as we continued in our walk.

Night had jumped on us rather quickly. Probably because of how much time we spent in the village fighting bandits and putting out fires. We had started through a forest only a few minutes ago. This forest would have to be the one the Risen pop up in and that meant no stopping.

Auden attempted to get me to stop a short while back to set up camp but I refused with the, "I don't like sleeping in forests," excuse.

Before I continue on with anything else, I'd like to point out that my nice new red shirt was obviously cut on my left shoulder. It left a break in the clothing that revealed my white skin underneath. While I talk about my left shoulder, my deep cut I received from that bandit's axe was thankfully healed by Lissa, but there was still a cut left. She told me it wasn't a scar or anything. Apparently, healing will only take it down to something like a cut and then it's up to the body to heal it. Also, my shoulder still kind of feels like an axe was run through it. It might be the aftershock or something.

Anyways, back to my red shirt, my blood had stained part of the shirt. Thankfully, it's not terribly noticeable. It's still a little irking though that my clothing is already getting messed up.

Why couldn't they have ruined the handkerchief bandana?

Strangely, our walking speed seemed to be dwindling as we got slower and slower. I looked over to Auden whom was carelessly continuing in the slow walk.

"Come on… pick up the pace. I don't want to… be in this forest any longer than I need to be," I said in an exhausted state trying to get him to go a little faster.

It was for his own safety. He can take on bandits no problem but Risen are a different story I'm sure. Also, we have no healer on the team now so there won't be any miraculous survivals if one of us gets hit with a fatal wound.

Auden looked to me with a puzzled expression. He then retorted with, "I'm not the one slowing down. You're the slow one. I'm just keeping pace with you."

I took a brief check on how I was walking and he was apparently right. I had slowed down and I wasn't getting any faster. A short while back I had started to lose most feeling in my legs, but I threw it under the bus as being the least of my concerns. My head was starting to feel a little light as well but I didn't want to stop.

It would seem that both of these problems I should've taken note of are hitting me harder now than they were before.

"It's whatever. We'll just keep going at-" I tried to respond to him but I tripped from my lack of real coordination in walking.

I fell to the ground and barely managed to catch myself by throwing out both of my hands infront of me. I then started to slowly push myself back up.

"Hey, hey," Auden said as he helped me up to my feet, "You need to rest, Vince. Loss of blood can take a lot out of ya."

"You lost… way more than me. I'll be fine," I replied trying to keep walking.

"Yeah, I have and I'm pretty used to the feeling. You on the other hand are going to take a break whether you want to or not," Auden said while lying me onto my back.

"No, you don't understand… Danger… there's…" I attempted to dissuade him from setting up camp but I couldn't find the energy to do so.

"Danger? You're talking to the guy that wrestled with a bear! No danger is too much for me!" Auden replied enthusiastically as he punched his chest.

No… Auden… You can't fight…. These things…

My mind blanked as my eyes shut on me. I had fallen asleep in the forest soon to be overrun by walking corpses.

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With the sun having set a while ago, the group of Robin, Chrom, Lissa, and Frederick all decided to set up camp for the night in the forest. They gathered up fire wood and even killed a bear for its meat.

The four individuals gathered around the fire and started to dig into their meals. Well, half of them were digging in. Frederick kept a safe distance from the cooked meat of the bear he killed, but he excused it as not being hungry. Lissa, on the other hand, made it apparent that she wasn't letting the bear meat anywhere near her mouth like a certain bug.

Robin and Chrom, however, were enjoying the meal quite profoundly. The tactician was enjoying it far more than his companion.

"Yuck! How can you two eat that stuff?!" Lissa questioned the two males eating bear meat.

"It's a part of the joys of traveling, Lissa!" Lissa's brother Chrom replied enthusiastically before taking another bite of the bear meat.

Lissa then looked over to Robin who was practically hounding the meat down in large quantities.

She let out a dejected sigh as she quietly said to herself, "And I thought only Chrom could be the way he is."

"What was that, Lissa?" Chroma asked.

"Nothing, dear brother," Lissa answered with a smile.

"Well then get to eating. You could use it," Chrom said blatantly as he tried to hand some bear meat to his sister.

This comment had struck a nerve somewhere on Lissa and it wasn't a pleasant one. She replied to her brother with, "Me?! What are you trying to say, huh? And what about Frederick? He hasn't even touched the stuff since he killed the thing!"

All eyes shifted to Frederick who gave them a small smirk as he avoided looking at the bear meat Robin and Chrom held. He waved his hands in front of himself as he said, "No, no. I'll be perfectly fine. Milord and milady need to eat more than me."

"Frederick, you know I worry for your wellbeing on these trips. There are times when you never eat during them," Chrom said to his knight.

"Really?" Robin asked with his mouth full. He then swallowed his food and continued with, "You don't eat anything during some of these, Frederick?"

Frederick looked back and forth between the three other campers with a small smirk. It was a strange expression he had. It was one to express calmness but his actions were slightly off of being calm. He then said calmly, "I do eat on these trips. I just eat after you've all gone to bed. It's why I stay up later than the rest of you."

The other three all seemed to have a realization at the same time as they nodded in understanding to Frederick's answer. The three went back to looking at the fire as Frederick sneakily wiped away a bead of sweat that had formed on his forehead.

"Hey, wait a second," Lissa suddenly said.

The entire group looked at Lissa while Frederick started to visibly sweat. Lissa then looked to Frederick as the other two in the group did the same. She then pointed at him and said, "How did you kill the bear? You didn't take your lance so I was wondering how you did it."

Robin and Chrom nodded as Chrom added in with, "Yes, I was wondering that as well."

Frederick's visible sweat suddenly ceased itself altogether as he let out a sigh of relief. He then gave the three others in his party a smile as he asked, "Have you ever heard the tale of the man that wrestled with a bear?"

The three younger individuals shook their heads no and waited for Frederick to continue.

"Well, there was once this man. Strong and brave was this man as he set out on a heroic quest. The quest in tell was to slay a powerful and evil dragon. One night the man had just started setting up his camp when suddenly…" Frederick started to tell his story as the other three carefully listened.

Some time passed and the group was told of the heroic adventures of some… man. They were on the edges of their seats at some points and even let out some gasps at other points. Frederick held no punches back in the telling of the story. He even got up at some points and helped for his audience to visualize the story by performing the actions he was describing.

Too soon, however, the story was over and almost the entire audience of Frederick's story was left satisfied. All but one person who will surely voice their disapproval of the story shortly.

"Wow! So he wrestled the bear while fending off invaders of a nearby village?" Lissa asked with admiration.

Frederick nodded in confirmation and awaited his next question.

This time it was Chrom that asked, "And then the villagers rewarded him by giving him the secret to the dragon's weakness?"

Frederick nodded again in a proud state that his audience understood the entirety of his story.

"And then he went to the dragon and beat it by shooting a venom arrow into its chest? Special venom meant to kill dragons?" Lissa asked another couple of questions.

"Yes, and the villagers erected a statue to serve in his honor and they renamed the village after him," Frederick stated as fact.

Chrom stretched his arms back as he said, "That was definitely a good tale, Frederick. It had just the right amount of action that a hero's tale needs."

"Who care about the action? I loved the ending! Finding your one true love is every girl's dream," Lissa exclaimed with a twirl.

"Thank you, milord, and, milady" Frederick bowed to Chrom and Lissa in gratitude.

Chrom was about to head off for bed when he noticed Robin still sitting. Robin was seated cross legged on the ground with his arms crossed across his chest. It was clear that he was upset about something.

"What's wrong, Robin. Was Frederick's story not enjoyable?" Chrom asked his tactician with concern.

"No, I didn't like it." Robin stated with a frown.

"What?!" Lissa exclaimed in shock, "But what about the romance? It was amazing!"

"That's not it. It's just… I didn't like the ending fight with the dragon," Robin said with a permanent frown on his face.

"W-What was wrong with the dragon fight?" Frederick asked in shock that somebody didn't enjoy his story.

"It ended in one move! I had thought up this big plan on how the dragon would be killed and it didn't happen! All that planning for nothing!" Robin shouted out in sadness.

The group felt confusion settle onto their shoulders until they all quickly understood. The life of a tactician was definitely thoroughly implanted into Robin's head. Even if he doesn't remember anything else, tactics, swordplay, and sorcery were second nature to him.

Chrom placed a hand on Robin's shoulder as he assured him, "Don't worry. We'll find a dragon and then you can tell us your entire brilliant plan."

"Y-You think so?" Robin asked.

"Well… No, but it could happen!" Chrom stated with a grin.

Chrom's assurance of the possibility of a dragon in the future surprisingly calmed Robin down a little. It calmed Robin down while it left Lissa worrying about having to face a dragon. She just hoped that there would be some of that special

dragon killing venom lying around.

"As much as I enjoyed telling us all a story, we should head to sleep now, milord," Frederick stated as he took notice of the dying fire.

"You're right, Frederick. We'll all get some rest and then we'll tackle tomorrow with our fullest energy," Chrom said to his soldiers.

The group agreed with the idea and started to make their way to their personally chosen, comfortable, cold spot on the ground. They all stopped halfway to their destinations when Chrom suddenly said, "Wait a second!"

Frederick stopped the fastest in his tracks as he started to sweat bullets again.

"*P-Please don't tell me to eat anything, milord,"* Frederick thought in a panic.

"Frederick," Chrom said sternly. He glared daggers at the knight causing him to almost break his calm demeanor. He then continued with, "that story didn't explain how you killed the bear at all!"

Lissa joined in with a, "Hey, that's right."

For the second time today, Frederick had avoided what he believed to be sure doom. He then quickly pointed out, "I wrestled with it. That story was my inspiration to try doing so."

The others in the camp paused briefly as the thought of what their companion Frederick had just told them. He had wrestled a bear… to death. There was no possible way that they could get that out of their heads.

"Now, if you'll excuse me. I've got a nice spot in the dirt over near that tree with my name on it," Frederick said as he walked calmly towards a tree he pointed to.

He walked directly past the other three who were hopelessly staring in one definite direction together.

"Never anger, Frederick," Chrom said to his two other companions quietly.

"Agreed," both Robin and Lissa quickly said in unison.

They then went their separate ways towards their dirt beds. They each laid themselves down on the ground and fell asleep in the cold confines of the forest. Unbeknownst to them, however, they would be getting a rather rude awakening from some walking corpses and a giant fire fairly shortly.

/\WWWW\

"Risen!' I yelled as I shot up from my sleeping position.

My breathing was quick and out of pace as I tried to calm myself. While doing so, I took the opportunity to look around myself. A normally unclean room surrounded me on all four sides. I was even back in the confines of my bed that I had carelessly fallen asleep in.

I-I'm back? W-Wait. Did I even leave? Was it really all a dream? I swear it was so real that I couldn't have possibly dreamt that up.

I wiped my forehead with my hand and noticed that I was sweating profusely. At the same time, I noticed that I was back in my regular clothes. Blue jeans and a regular t-shirt. No handkerchief bandana in sight.

I really am still on Earth. Am I just losing it? Jeez… What did I eat to give me crap dreams like that?

Shifting my body, I hung my legs off of my bed and planted them onto the floor of my nice, normal room. I took a peek out of my blinds and noticed that the sun was just starting to rise. The beauty of my room is that my window is pointed to the east so I'm only welcomed by the sun in the morning until it passes over my house.

I must've slept through the night. It was late afternoon when I fell asleep. Man… that means I missed out on dinner.

A couple of knocks came from someone on the other side of my door. The sudden noise shook me from my thoughts as I turned to look at the door.

"You can open the door," I called out to the individual.

My door is opened and the person to enter was my mother. My mom was fairly old and a good amount shorter than me. She had the same color hair as me but she usually died it blonde to avoid any unsavory gray hairs.

She entered into my room and gave me a quick, "Good morning."

"Morning, mom," I said back to her with a smile.

"It's nice to see you awake at this time," my mom said in a joking manner.

Can't say I'm not accustomed to this usual teasing. I was fairly nocturnal in my way of life. I'd sleep through mornings only to wake up mid-way into the day.

"I got my usual ten hours of sleep. I'd say I'm pretty close to fully rested," I answered back in a similar joking manner.

"Good, then you can get started with your chores," my mom said now getting a little more serious, "You can start by cleaning this room and your dad wants you to mow the lawn before he gets home."

"Ok, mom," I deadpanned.

With the orders now finished, my mom exited my room and went downstairs.

Was fighting bandits worse than chores? Can't say I could tell.

The day went by fairly quickly with me having almost constant work to do. The work was almost unbearable, but it's either this or I'd probably get kicked out. Not sure if it would really happen but I'd rather not find out.

I'd like to say I had an easy time doing the chores but that would be giving me too much credit. It was nearing the start of summer and that only meant shitty hot weather. I found myself drenched in my own sweat after mowing the lawns. Also, the actual physical labor was oddly a bit more difficult than usual. Not that I couldn't handle modern day physical labor, but there was something else that felt weird. My left arm felt oddly sore and I couldn't understand what could be bothering it. Perhaps it was because I didn't stretch or something?

Either way, I finished the work and went straight for getting a shower afterwards. No sense in walking around in my own filth after all.

I entered my bathroom and started to get the shower ready. I loosened my body and found my left arm still giving me problems. It felt as sore as it did while I was performing chores. I hadn't the slightest idea on what it could've been.

Brushing aside the pain in my arm, I took off my shirt. When I got it fully off, I noticed something in the mirror in front of me. On my left shoulder was a red cut. As if something had recently cut my arm and it was starting the healing process.

I didn't do anything to cut myself. Where in the world did-

No, wait. I-In that dream. An axe sliced into my left shoulder! Lissa healed the wound but it left a cut!

There's no way. This is just a coincidence right? I must've cut my shoulder yesterday and that event made itself out again in the dream, right?

Yeah… You have strange cuts related to dreams popping up on you all the time… Tch… No… No, you don't have strange cuts related to fucking dreams popping up on yourself!

Ok, paranoia active.

I know that I didn't get any cuts yesterday except in that dream. Either I've got short term memory loss, I'm an oblivious idiot that doesn't notice when they cut themselves, I'm going insane, or I legitimately was in Fire Emblem in what I thought was a dream.

Please, let me be oblivious.

Being me in my paranoia state, I shut off the shower and put back on my shirt. I exited my bathroom and went back to my room. On my desk in my room sat the devil himself. In the form of my 3ds.

I find what I'm about to do idiotic, but I'm about to perform it anyway. As I inched closer and closer to the demon of a console on my desk, my heart started to race. Each step closer to it made me feel like I was going to be plopped back into the hell hole of the game that was currently inside it.

When I was within arm's reach of the devil's creature, I flipped it open and hopped back to take cover. I feared that the screens would become vortexes or maybe even the entire console itself.

My fears were quelled, however, when nothing happened. All that resulted from my stupid paranoia was that I now have opened my 3ds on my desk. Nothing more, nothing less.

It was far from what I expected but then again this is real life. It isn't a Sci-Fi movie in the slightest.

Still, I didn't stop my worrying. I still had more investigating to perform. If things check out with my 3ds, then I can at least stop freaking out about this cut. Until then, I'll remain a paranoid mess.

In another part of my investigation of my 3ds, I turned the beast on. The handheld console started up and I had it play Fire Emblem: Awakening which had been sitting inside of it. The game started up as normal and things seemed to be going just fine. I got past the start screen and things got a little funky.

There was only one option; New Game. There was another one but it was blanked out for some odd reason. That option was continue. I found this to be rather sketchy as I know that I still had my previous save files on here. Also, shouldn't there be more options? I know that there should be an Extras, a Copy and a few others but they weren't here.

I tried ignoring these oddities and went ahead to starting a new game. The game didn't even bother to ask me about a difficulty, or even what mode I'd like to play on though! It even skipped the avatar creation part and went straight into the game. Things didn't stop being weird there, however, because the game skipped the Premonition by going straight into the Prologue.

The fuck is going on?! Well, at least it's starting the Prologue like normal. Robin getting picked up by the Shepherds. Ok, ok. So now they head to the burning village and fight the bandits. Alright, it's still going normal with the game putting the battle into a strategy style of play. Hey… What are those green units to the right of the main characters?

As if to spit on my hopes that things were going right finally, two green units ran onto the bottom right of the field. One was indefinitely a mercenary class and the other… Well, I have no clue what the hell that one's supposed to be.

Like any other ally units that appear, they started conversing. A portrait of a man with black hair and a beard wearing a white vest slid onto the screen along with one of a younger individual with a red shirt and brown hair.

I don't like where this is going.

The mercenary was the first one to start with, "What's your name, kid?"

That sounds… too familiar.

"I'm not a kid! And what's with the sudden interest in names?! If we die here, then our names aren't going to matter or anything!" the other green unit said in protest.

No, no. It's just like…

"I like to know the names of people I might be fighting beside. It shows trust. Trust that will aid us on the battlefield. My name's Auden," the mercenary unit said.

That. Fucking. Dream.

Well, if that's Auden, then that must mean…

"My name's Vincent. Since we might die here, I'll let you call me Vince just this once," the other green unit with my name replied.

I'm… I'm… I'm in the fucking game… while I'm not in the game… What?!

So that's Chapter 2 in a nutshell. It might be less eventful than the last one but this is where I planned to end it.

Can I say right now that things might only get weirder? Because things might only get weirder considering it's me writing this thing.

So if you didn't notice, the story Frederick was telling was originally Auden's tale of one of his past adventures. It is supposed to be a classic moment of stories being past around so much they get thrown out of proportion. It got so thrown out of proportion that the story merely calls the hero a man and not Auden. I wrote Frederick telling this story

because in the game the characters do kill a bear and I just so happened to start off the chapter with Auden talking about wrestling a bear. I figured, why not put in an invisible link between the two occurrences because Frederick wrestling a bear to death sounds awesome?

Anyhow, Vincent's back in the real world while he has a video game version of himself in the game. How will this go?

If you have any questions, concerns, or anything at all, don't be afraid to send it in a pm or put in a review. I will respond to any questions and fix any problems that I possibly can concerning this fic.

Chapter 3: Back in the Game

So another chapter has arrived.

I've decided to instead go by a at least one chapter a week type of upload. That way, I'll be for sure putting out a chapter at least every week but that doesn't mean I can't upload two if I get another done. Hopefully you guys appreciate this.

In other news, I'd like to say thanks to everyone reviewing. It helps a lot. I'll especially say thanks to o realisticFantasy o who has reviewed both chapters. I'm glad you're enjoying the fic and hope you keep on reviewing.

Anyhow, the chapter is just below here so I'll allow you all to get to reading now.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Back in the Game

Ok, so if that's me then am I still me? Shut up. Stop thinking stupid. That's just a video game version of you that for some reason is in a game that he doesn't belong in.

Ok, that sounded just as stupid.

The hell? The battle started but I'm not even controlling the units. They're just running around as if a cpu was playing against itself. How entertaining is this garbage?

It looks like when Auden and I charged in it was about the same time that the Shepherds arrived and they took on the other half of bandits.

The Shepherds also looked like they took on a couple of mages that were a part of this rag tag of bandits.

Glad I didn't have to fight those. Probably wouldn't be watching this if that was the case.

Jeez… the video game me is just running away as a bandit chases after him.

There were times where in the game the bandit could've just cut me off with the way the game mechanics work, but instead he followed a straight path that I was going in. When he finally caught me after my character had an event for picking up an iron axe, he attacked me. There wasn't any numbers for health but I know for a fact that shit did a lot of damage.

Everything's playing out like it did in the dream. Apparently when Robin saved me from that bandit I was considered to have been recruited as I turned blue. Meanwhile, it looked like the bandit that wounded Auden had gotten a critical on him but he didn't die. He then returned the favor with a critical of his own which effectively killed the bandit. Finally, as Lissa healed me and Auden, the rest of the team faced off against the bandit leader. Robin stayed in the back while Chrom and Frederick served as front liners. They took him down in a few attacks and then the battle ended.

The game proceeded to play out familiar scenes in the form of animated cut scenes. Everything played out the same way it did in the dream. When Auden and I left the Shepherds, however, the game abruptly brought up an option to save the game. The game chose to save on its own and then both of my 3ds screens turned black.

The hell? Did my 3ds just die? No, the power light is still on. Hold on. It's taking me back to the start screen of the game.

I get past the screen once more and the game started to look normal again. All the regular options in the main menu have returned and I could even load up my previous save files.

Ok, it's official. I'm losing my mind. Did I just watch a movie version of my dream just now or am I just hallucinating?

"Come and eat," my mom shouted from downstairs.

Against my better judgment, I decided to close my 3ds and set it back down onto my desk before heading downstairs to eat.

I then proceeded to eat dinner normally with the rest of my family. Or at least, they were able to eat normally. I couldn't

help but think about how insane I must be becoming. My mind was playing deadly tricks on me. I might be in need of a checkup at the hospital if this gets any weirder.

When dinner was over, I found myself oddly tuckered out. Usually I'd stay up till far after midnight but I guess my sleep schedule has been changed once again. I was slightly afraid of going to sleep after experiencing that dream and those hallucinations, but I gave in to my body's needs. I would just end up in a bigger mess of insanity if I became sleep deprived.

I climbed into my bed once again praying that I would awake in it instead of a game. My eyes shut and I calmed myself as I drifted into a hopefully normal sleep.

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Hot. The entire surrounding of my body was extremely hot. It was a similar feeling that I felt when near those burning buildings in my dream. Crackling noises and explosions resonated through the air around me. Things smelled like they were on fire.

When I opened my eyes, I realized that I was being carried. A man with black hair was carrying me on his back as we ran through a burning forest. A forest that was being put on fire because of fire balls falling from the sky.

"Ah, so you're awake! That's good to know! I thought you might try and sleep through this whole ordeal," the man said with a small laugh at the end.

That voice… You've got to be kidding me…

"Auden?" I quietly asked in confusion.

"What? You already forget your old pal Auden, Vince?" Auden asked in a slightly less amused tone of voice as he continued to carry me through the burning forest.

Of course it is… I'm back in the game.

Ok, I can second guess this later. For now, I'll take this for what it is. A death trap.

"What… What's going on?" I asked as I was regaining my strength.

"While you were having a snooze, this crazy stuff started to happen! Now we're getting the hell away from it! That good enough for ya?" Auden said ending his explanation.

Alright, no Risen yet. Wait. No Risen. Yet.

"Auden, stop!" I shouted in Auden's ear.

He came to a quick halt as he let me get down from his back. A few more fireballs crash into the ground around us. One smashed into a tree behind us causing it to fall over.

"What is it?! I don't know about you, but I like not being charred!" Auden said in slight frustration.

Ok, ok. Look around for the gates. Find the fucking gates!

"Vince, we need to go!" Auden said as he attempted to grab my arm to drag me.

I moved away as I continued to survey the sky for any portals. In a few more seconds of searching, a portal appeared and I pointed to it.

"Look! See that?!" I shouted as I pointed towards the portal.

Auden looked at the portal I was directly pointing at and his eyes slightly widened.

"Gods, what is that?" Auden silently asked himself.

Out of the portal a dark corpse that looked like a soldier started to push its way out until it fell to the ground. More portals opened up in the nearby vicinity and more corpses fell from them. It was the Risen and as should've been expected, they were well armored. Makes sense since they used to be soldiers and all.

Ok, so if Auden hasn't seen a portal before either he's blind or that was the first one. Which would mean Chrom and the

others are in that direction. They should be fine, but I'd feel better if we weren't in this forest anymore. Even if that means we run back to Southtown, it'll be better than encountering any Risen.

Taking into account where portals appeared and where they didn't, I found the best direction to get out of this mess.

"Come on, Auden. We have to-" I was cut off as Auden gripped onto my arm.

His grip was strong and he had no plan of letting me walk any further. He looked at me with a serious expression and asked, "You knew this would happen, didn't you?"

There was no hint of anything but serious to Auden's question. He was either seriously worried or pissed that I hid away information from him.

I stared back at Auden as I said as quickly as possible, "I promise to explain later! We have to move!"

He held onto my arm and kept us stationary in the burning forest being filled to the brim with walking corpses. His paranoia of me, or whatever it is, is only making things a hell of a lot harder.

He let go of my arm with a grunt and drew his short sword from its sheath.

"What's the plan?" he asked while he gritted his teeth.

"We run that way and AVOID these corpses," I said while pointing in the direction we should run.

Auden didn't protest in my plan. Instead, he followed me as we ran in what I believed would be the safest route.

As we ran, I occasionally took a look to our left or right to see if we might be passing any Risen. There was in fact Risen on both of our sides, but we were seemingly being unnoticed by them. Either that or we weren't there first priority. I find it more likely that the reason is the former.

Our path was clear and we even managed to escape the raging forest fire that was now behind us.

This is good. This is good. This is bad. Very bad. Why did I have to think this was good?!

To stomp out my hopes of avoiding Risen, Auden and I spotted a group of them a short distance away in front of us. Not a large group as it only consisted of three of them, but it was still problematic. They hadn't noticed us yet and were wondering off in a different direction.

If we just wait here long enough, they'll be out of our path; but we could also be attacked by ones behind us if we wait too long!

I was torn between what to do. We were trapped on all sides with these things and would be facing a fight for sure if we tried anything.

Auden looked to me for some kind of idea I might had. When I didn't give one, he then seemingly decided to get ready for a fight.

Just then, another person appeared. One that thankfully wasn't a Risen. They appeared in front of us and started to do battle with the group of three Risen in front of me and Auden.

The person had short blue hair and an outfit that consisted of a color scheme involving red and blue with some gold trimmings running through it. They even had on a tiara that was meant to pose as a headband. The individual had on a butterfly mask and struck out against the Risen with their sword that looked identical to the Falchion.

That couldn't be. No, no. It is! We're saved! Thank the lord it's Lu- I mean, Marth! Yeah, it's Marth!

God that's going to be weird.

So Lucina- I mean Marth! Damnit! Marth! You can't go calling her Lucina or you'll get a sword pointed at you!

Marth leaped into the fray of battling Risen as she-

W-Wait. Should I get used to calling her a he for now too? I-I… I'm so confused…

I'll… I'll just do Marth and he. It'll save me from any mistakes while speaking.

So Math leaped into the fray of battling Risen as he swung his sword, Falchion, into one of the corpses. This caught the Risen by surprise in an unsurprising matter. They're corpses. It's not like they could've predicted that.

One of the Risen was quickly dispatched of with Marth's attack as it faded away. This, however, only seemed to alert the other Risen in the area as they turned to me and Auden. They're red eyes pierced into me as they started to limp slowly towards us.

We're doomed! Marth has doomed us! Damn you, Marth!

"Tch. No sense in running now, Vince." Auden said as he prepared to defend against an incoming Risen.

"U-Uh… Yeah!" I said as I realized I should be drawing my sword as well.

In the meantime, Marth had taken care of the Risen he was fighting in a timely manner and turned to me and Auden. He gritted his teeth as he saw Risen coming towards us.

I had managed to take my sword out of its sheath on my side and decided to hold it with both of my hands.

W-Wait. Is this how you hold it or is it like this?

I fumbled around in what way I should be properly holding the iron sword. I hadn't the foggiest idea of how a sword should be held when trying to defend so I was at a loss for proper sword stances.

The Risen's previous limp pace they were moving at morphed into a berserk bum rush straight for us. One went straight for Auden and another for me. Mine had an axe, but my possible weapon triangle advantage didn't boost my confidence.

At about the same time the Risen started their charge, Marth did as well. He was trying to intercept at least one of them as fast as possible while more Risen waited in the wings of the forest.

As the Risen came towards me with blinding speed, I took the best possible defensive stance I could muster. My grip on my sword was loose and my balance was completely off. I had to be the worst swordsman in the world. This world that is.

The Risen neared my vicinity and took his chance to attack me. He lifted his axe up and brought it down in a left to right swing. I raised my sword to block the attack as soon as possible.

The axe crashed into my sword with pure power and knocked my sword clear out of my hands. My sword was sent into the air and a few feet to my right.

Damnit! Can't I do something right?!

Auden was already preoccupied with dealing with another Risen that had a sword. He was easily outmaneuvering the corpse but Risen are clearly resilient. Only killing blows will do them harm.

In the meantime, I was left defenseless facing a Risen that was out for my head.

Is me getting attacked without a weapon going to become a daily thing here? Crap! It is!

The Risen took his axe and swung for my gut in a horizontal fashion. He was going to rip open my stomach and play surgery with my insides!

Do what you do best! Dodge!

I hopped backwards effectively dodging the axe swing. At about the same time, Marth cleaved the Risen's head off with his Falchion in a bull charge. He stopped in his rush as he turned to me.

"Grab your weapon!" He shouted to me as he faked a male's voice.

No, I feel like leaving my sword on the ground while the corpses chop my head off. I quite enjoy the thought of being defenseless. It'll make things so much easier for the corpses.

The hell do you think I'm going to do?! I'm not here to pick flowers!

Despite my anger of being told to do what I intended on doing, I made way for my sword on the ground while Marth and Auden handled the other Risen. Auden couldn't seem to understand why the corpse he had stabbed multiple times was still kicking. He seemed to connect the dots, however, when Marth came in and killed the corpse with one blow.

When I grabbed my sword off the ground, more Risen came out of the trees and closer to our vicinity.

There was about four of them or so which gave them a clear numbers advantage. No kind of long range fighter on their side though thankfully. Just two axe wielders and two sword wielders.

"So…" I said as I backed slowly into the comforts of being near my allies, "Anybody feeling up for fighting two of these things?"

"Leave it to me," Marth said as he went to draw the attention of two of the Risen.

Surprisingly, Auden didn't really say anything and went straight for attacking the last axe wielding Risen coming towards him and me. I had expected him to joke around about my obvious desire of wanting to only fight one of these things. Instead, he seemed to be nothing but business.

I'll have to wonder about that later. I've got to learn how to fight eventually. Might as well be against the living dead.

Learning from my past mistake, I gripped onto my sword's hilt as tight as I could. I still didn't have a clue on how to swing or even stand properly with this thing; but how hard could it be to hit a zombie's head?

The last Risen nearing me was one with a sword. I'd say we were on equal terms but I feel like he has a clear advantage over the inexperienced me.

The Risen charged forward with his sword and swung for me the first chance he had. His sword came towards my left side and I managed to block it with my own sword. This time, thankfully, I didn't drop my sword!

Ok, I know how to block I guess? It doesn't do much good when that's all I can do!

The Risen was relentless. After his first attack, he gave me no time to even think about counterattacking. He came right for me with another swing. This time he was doing an overhead swing for my head.

Block? Dodge? Block? Dodge? BLOCK!

I didn't really know how I should handle his attack and was forced into trying a block. I held my sword horizontally over my head to stop his swing. Sure enough, his attack recoiled off my sword again thanks to my successful block.

Ok… Um. Slice?

The Risen was still recoiling from having struck against my sword and I felt that I could try to go for an attack on him. I took my sword and went for a chop at the Risen's neck. The attack connected surprisingly enough and I felt a surge of joy sweep over me.

I got it! Yes, I got it! It's still moving… I didn't get it! I did not get it!

What I had thought to be a killing below turned out to be merely a scratch to the Risen as he tried to swing his sword for me again. I took a step back to dodge it successfully and found my back against a tree. Not the best of places to be in.

The Risen came after me and went for yet another attack. He came towards me swinging his sword towards my right side. I sidestepped to the left and avoided another one of his attacks. It also helped to find out that the Risen had gotten his sword stuck in the tree from overshooting his swing and missing my body.

Alright this is a piece of cake. Stupid Risen. Who gets there sword stuck in a tree anyways?

I took my sword and chopped the struggling Risen's head clear off. I would've felt bad had that been a living being but this was just a corpse so I felt no real remorse.

Having finally finished my fight, I looked for my allies. Auden continued to fight other Risen having now gotten the groove of dispatching them while Marth was handling a couple more Risen.

It didn't look good though when I saw Marth about to get sneak attacked by another Risen that had emerged from a nearby shrub.

Marth was preoccupied with blocking attacks with another Risen when the corpse neared his back. I then found myself running to assist him by taking out the flanking Risen.

The Risen got to Marth's back at the same time that I reached its own. It raised its axe up in the air as it was going to go for a killing blow on Marth.

"Watch out!" I shouted from behind Marth.

He turned his head slightly to see what was going on behind him when it all happened. I swung my sword to cleave off the Risen's head in one go and that was completely successful. Except I overshot my swing and was going to cleave into Marth as well!

Marth saw my foolish mistakes and ducked under my blade's path. This resulted in my swing continuing unimpeded directly into a tree. A tree that would not let me take my sword back. I had gotten my sword stuck in a tree…

Is this for making fun of that Risen?

In a flash, Marth took out the Risen he was fighting by stabbing up into the bottom of its chin while he was low to the ground. He then turned to me and asked angrily, "What are you doing?"

"What am I doing?" I repeated his question, "I'm trying to help!"

Marth then walked past me and parried an incoming Risen that was heading for the two of us. He then spun his sword around several times before slicing the Risen clear in half. The now two halves of a Risen slowly dissipated as the body's halves slowly fell to the sides.

"Well, don't. I don't need any help from you," he said coldly.

Jeez... No need to be so cold. It was in goodwill that I… almost… chopped… your head off… I'll stop now.

At the same time that I removed my sword from the trunk of the tree, Auden dispatched of the final Risen in our area.

Man, not even a chief or something? Ok, don't jinx yourself. I'm happy there's no chief.

The two of us regrouped around Marth whom had now sheathed his Falchion. Auden and I sheathed our swords at roughly the same time afterwards.

"Man… that was like something out of a horror movie," I said in a slip of the tongue.

Both Auden and even Marth looked to me with confusion. Even though it was hard to tell behind Marth's mask, one could distinguish that even he was confused.

"A horror," Auden started with and Marth continued with, "movie?"

Crap. Crap. Crap. Stupid medieval fantasy game! Why couldn't this have been a Sci-Fi one?! They would know all of my stupid technology and even have some made up crap that I wouldn't understand!

How do I defuse this? Uh. Play it off?

"It's nothing… I'm just a little… shaken up still… That's all," I answered while trying to keep calm.

The two of them kept their eyes glued to me for what felt like hours. In reality it was only a minute or so, but that changed nothing. I tried my hardest to keep eye contact with at least one of them so that I didn't look suspicious. This was a lot harder than I thought it would be as I found myself darting my eyes away a couple of times.

They seemed to decide to ignore my erratic statement though as they stopped looking at me. I tried my hardest to not let out an audible sigh of relief that could've brought their eyes back to me. Somehow, I managed to succeed in that department.

Marth then turned back to Auden and me and said, "It would be best if you two left… now."

"That's it? Nobody is going to explain anything? I mean, what is your name even?!" Auden asked as he looked at Marth.

"My name is unimportant but you may call me Marth," Math said as he started to walk away from me and Auden.

"Marth? You mean like the one in the legends?" Auden questioned.

"Yes… that one," Marth said as he paused in his walk. He then started it up again as he said back to us, "You'll live longer if you avoid these creatures in the future."

Yeah, he's probably right about that.

Marth continued in his walk away as Auden looked to me and asked, "Want to follow her?"

"Follow? W-Wait! Did you call him a her?!" I asked in a surprised tone.

How the hell does he know that Marth's a she?! I'll say that her get up and voice isn't all that convincing, but it still doesn't give any reason for suspicion in the slightest!

"Yeah, why did you think she was a dude?!" He asked with a grin.

"W-Well, I mean… Yeah, I guess…" I answered nervously.

Auden let out a laugh as he pushed me forward. He then said from behind me, "You'll have to get your eyes checked my friend!"

Tch. My eyes don't need checking! I'm just not supposed to know he's a she! Ugh. And after I got used to referring to her as Marth and a he too! I'm just going to say Lucina and she damnit! Screw all this confusing fake name and gender stuff!

"H-Hang on!" I said as I stopped Auden from continuing to push me forward. I then asked, "Why the hell are we following her?!"

"I think it's damn obvious that she knows something and I'd like to find out what," Auden said as he resumed with pushing me forward.

"B-But, I said I'd explain!" I retorted.

"Ah, you can do that later. I've got your promise to explain later. It couldn't hurt if I get some extra information out of this so called Marth," Auden said while he pushed me forward.

He kept us a safe distance behind Lucina as we followed her to wherever she was going. I didn't want to follow Lucina because it could make us look rather suspicious, but Auden was practically forcing me to do it. He continuously shushed me whenever I would try to get him to stop.

Either Lucina was slightly deaf, we were pretty good at sneaking, or she knew we were following her and didn't care; because she never turned around to bust us. Instead, she walked briskly through the forest while Auden and I followed from behind.

She stopped momentarily and I almost audibly gasped. Auden stopped me, however, as he placed his hand over my mouth and hid me behind a tree he ducked behind. Lucina might've heard the rustling behind her because she looked back. When she found nothing, she returned to her walk.

Auden then released me and I gasped for air. I then asked, "Can we please stop this? She's probably just wandering around the forest and we're just going to look like idiots when we realize that."

"Wandering? Wanders don't meet up with a group of Shepherds," Auden stated as he pointed to where Lucina had gone. She had been going back to converse with Chrom and his group this whole time. It would look like Sully and Virion joined up since I can see someone that resembles Virion hopelessly trying to converse with a woman on a horse.

The woman on the horse had what looked to be short red hair and cavalry armor that also had a few streaks of red on it. That helped reinforce my thoughts of her being Sully.

The man had shoulder length bluish hair and a bow on his back. He was also clearly dressed as a noble would. I'm certain that he would have to be Virion.

H-Hold it! So are you telling me that we ran off in the direction that Lucina went when the Chapter one battle started? Or maybe we were the cause of her leaving Chrom and the others to handle the Risen on their own? No, how would that be possible if I'm not even supposed to be here?! God! How much shit am I going to mess with?!

The Shepherds and Lucina continued in their conversation until Robin looked behind Lucina. He pointed towards me and Auden as we were attempting to hide in a bush.

Lucina drew her sword almost immediately but was calmed down by Chrom placing a hand on her blade. He then called out to me and Auden with, "Show yourselves! Lest you wish to meet with our blades!"

Auden was the first to rise up from behind the bush with his hands up in the air in a surrendering fashion. He looked to me to silently tell me to do the same. I did as I should and followed close behind him with my hands in the air as well.

"I must say, your new tactician has quite the eagle eyes, Chrom," Auden said in a joking manner.

"You two?! You followed me?!" Lucina questioned with anger.

"You know these two as well?" Chrom asked.

"Yes, I helped them just a few," Lucina was explaining until something connected in her head, "Wait! You know these two?!"

Chrom smiled as he stated, "Yes, they helped fight off some brigands in the town to the south of here."

"Then I suppose they aren't as helpless as I previously thought, but…" Lucina said as she raised her sword once again.

"That does not change the fact that you were spying on us. Explain yourselves," Lucina ordered.

"I'd like to merely know what could make one such as you be so calm in such strange occurrences like the one that just took place," Auden stated with a smirk.

"That has nothing to do with you," Lucina stated coldly.

"As I'm sure it doesn't, miss," Auden said which caused Lucina's mouth to drop slightly.

"H-How did you know?" Lucina questioned while breaking her strict demeanor. She also stopped trying to sound like a male as she let her real voice slip through.

Auden laughed quietly as he said, "When you've lived for as long as I have, you learn a few things. Plus, you didn't exactly persuade me to think different."

Is there anything Auden won't chalk up to him being old? Either way I guess it's true.

Chrom then interjected again as he said, "Um… Mis… Marth, could you please cease what you are doing right now. These two have explained themselves, haven't they?"

Lucina tried to say something but her words escaped her lips. Instead she sighed as she silently whispered, "Fine."

Lucina then started to walk away from the group before she was stopped by Robin asking, "You're just going to leave now? You warn us and then leave?"

"I have business to attend to elsewhere. Remember what I told you. Each second that is wasted brings this world closer to destruction," Lucina said ominously as she walked away into the forest.

"Strange girl," Auden said while scratching his beard.

"Yes, and you two are even stranger," Frederick said from atop his horse.

"Frederick," Chrom said while glaring at his knight.

"Milord, they stalked a woman back to us! If that doesn't prove their ulterior motives to you, then I'd say it would take a knife in the back to convince you," Frederick quickly said to Chrom while readying his rather intimidating Silver Lance.

This again? Is there anywhere I can be branded not a traitor on my body so this stops happening? I feel like in the short time I've been here that I've had one too many accuse me of being suspicious than I enjoy.

"Frederick, your wariness knows no bounds, and I appreciate it; but please let me say that I trust these two as I do the rest of the Shepherds," Chrom said with a smile to Frederick.

Frederick let out an audible sigh as he lowered his lance to his side. He then said dryly, "If that is what you think, milord."

"He uh… Do this to you too?" I asked in a whisper to Robin trying to feign to not have knowledge of Frederick's behavior.

Robin merely silently nodded as he looked at the great knight in front of him. He then shrunk into his boots when that very same great knight glared daggers at the both of us. I shrank back as well but Robin seemed oddly a bit more afraid of Frederick.

What's got him so terrified? Actually, I can understand why. Frederick's the calm guy nobody wants to piss off!

"So," Chrom said as he turned to me and Auden, "I assume you two were on your way to the capitol like us when you got

in whatever that just was."

Auden replied with, "Yeah, we took a break a bit farther ahead from here when the whole place went ablaze and those creatures showed up."

"What… were those creatures anyways?" Lissa asked while gripping onto her staff a little tighter than she probably normally does.

"Do not fear, milady! I shan't let those beasts get near your perfection ever again," Virion said as he slid up next to Lissa. Lissa returned his flirting with an audible gag as she backed away from the archer.

"You going to keep bothering the girl, Ruffles?" Sully asked from behind Virion while cracking her knuckles with a grin.

"A-Ah! Sully, my beauty! I have done no such thing! I was merely stating my devotion to protect the young beauty! Of course," Virion said as he got into Sully's personal bubble, " her beauty hardly compares to your own."

Sully's grin had disappeared as it was replaced with one of disgust. She then gave Virion a quick right hook that sent the poor guy straight into the dirt in front of her. She dusted off her gauntlets after decking the guy and grinned as she looked at him in the ground.

"What's the matter, Ruffles? The dirt more beautiful than us girls now?" Sully sarcastically asked.

Virion didn't respond. Instead, he twitched a few times and remained face first in the ground.

I-Is he going to be alright? Note to self: don't get punched by Sully.

Everybody except for Frederick and Sully looked at Virion with concern. Hell, even Lissa was about to reluctantly start healing the poor guy. That is, until he miraculously hopped back up to his feet seemingly unfazed by the punch dealt to him. Seemingly is the key word. He actually had a large bruise on his left cheek that looked awfully painful.

Virion, however, acted as if it was nothing at all. He gave us all a smile as he said, "Ah, the pains of love."

This surprised the hell out of the entire group and a slight bit of Sully's smirk showed that even she was impressed.

Of course we all got even more surprised when Sully walked over and said, "So you enjoyed that one, huh? Well, have another!"

She then gave poor Virion another mean punch. This time it was a left hook that sent him recoiling into a nearby tree.

I can't help but think she did so simply because he shrugged her punch off. The idiot should've stayed down or maybe showed some sign of discomfort from being hit!

Either way this only reaffirms my desire to never piss Sully off! Or even spar against her! She's terrifying!

Virion slumped down against the tree as he was seemingly knocked out cold from the other punch. His right cheek now had a bruise on it that covered in a similar way of the one his left cheek. Lissa again made her way to heal Virion when he apparently woke up!

He rubbed his right cheek as he said with a smile, "That one… hurt, my love. I'll have to ask for you to please not do it again."

Sully grinned at her, I suppose, victory she had gained over Virion as she walked back to her horse.

"Well," Chrom said feeling slight confused by what just happened. He then recovered from it as he said, "I'm wondering the same as Lissa. Just what were those things?"

The entire group shrugged save for Lissa and Virion as the latter was healed by the former. Auden then smirked as he looked over to me.

"Well, I think Vince here might have some information in that regard," Auden said with a smirk as everyone's attention turned on me.

You have got to be kidding me…

"I told you I'd tell you later," I whispered angrily to him.

"And I think now is later," Auden exclaimed joyfully.

You… You… You piece of shit! You damn piece of shit! You just have to go and screw me like this!

"Is that so, Vincent?" Chrom asked me.

"Well, I mean… Yeah…" I said while still being in slight anger of how Auden threw me under the bus.

"Then please tell us. Any information on these things will be beneficial to our kingdom," Chrom said with urgency.

Damn. Damn. Damn. How do I explain this to them?! Ok. Calm down Vincent. All you have to do is give the people what they want. Let's just leave out the whole being from another world and this one being a video game part. Hopefully they don't go around questioning me a lot. I can't deal with that kind of stuff easily.

"Ok, listen. I know a little bit about those creatures as you keep calling them," I said after taking a deep breath.

"Then what are they? Do they have a weakness? Where did they come from?" Chrom barraged a bunch of questions at me.

I held my hands up in front of me to signal him to stop or at least slow down. He does just this as he stops in his rampage of questions long enough for me to respond.

"L-Look… I know a little about them. Not a ton," I lied when I realistically could've answered most of his questions.

"My apologies. Please continue then," Chrom said after calming himself.

"Well… I only really know about this because it isn't exactly my first bout with them either," I said which seemed to surprise the others.

I've got to explain how I have this info or they'll just ask me later!

"You have?! When?" Robin asked.

"Funny enough it happened in this same forest a few days ago when I was coming through it. But it was nowhere near on this scale," I answered Robin without hesitation.

"You say this happened a few days ago? We traveled through this forest a few days ago as well and ran into no such creatures," Fredrick said with a glare.

"Again, it wasn't this bad. There were a couple of them and I was lucky enough to run into a few travelers that dealt with them. No real big deal like this," I said trying to dissuade Frederick's suspicions.

"Then where are these travelers? Perhaps they can assist?" Chrom asked.

I shrugged in response as I answered, "Who knows? They were supposedly heading far north while I wanted to go to Southtown."

"And you were heading to Southtown why?" Auden decided to ask.

God. Can we stop with the questions? My brain can only come up with so many lies!

"To meet up with an acquaintance of mine," I answered.

"And you stayed at a tavern without paying," Auden continued.

"What can I say? I'm broke," I said while I gave him a shrug and a smirk.

Auden smirked in response to my answer as he seemed to enjoy the way I answered him.

"Ok, ok. That's enough. What of these creatures, Vincent?! Weaknesses, habits, anything will help," Chrom stated trying to emphasis the urgency the Risen cause.

"Alright, alright. Well those creatures that you just fought… Yeah, well they aren't exactly creatures so to speak," I said while trying to find the best way to explain the Risen.

"What do you mean?" Robin asked with a look of intrigue.

"I mean, you guys have fought them right? They look human enough but they don't really act like it. They're more… feral," I answered while remembering having to fight the things myself.

Damn things just don't let up!

"That goes without saying," Frederick chimed in.

"Well, they're pretty irregular. They don't seem to have a definite strategy. It's just hack and slash for most of them. Also, they seem to be pretty resilient. Killing blows like ones to the head, the heart, or any other vital organs seem to be the only way to kill them," I said stating my observations.

While I would gladly tell them all about the Risen, it would probably get me nowhere. They would more than likely think of me as a lunatic and throw me in a cellar the first chance they got if I even mentioned something crazy. Something crazy like the Risen being soldiers reanimated by Grima himself, and that the very same fell dragon sent them back in time to fuck with Lucina who was trying to fuck with the past.

Chrom smiled at me explanations and then said, "Good. This is helpful information. Is there anything else?"

'I'm sorry. I can't really think of anything else. Besides the fact that I've decided to name them Risen," I said trying to give the name to the Shepherds.

"Risen? Why that?" Lissa asked after finishing healing Virion's wounds.

"You know, they kind of act like corpses and they kind of seem dead already. It's like they've risen from the dead. Risen," I said while trying to think of a reason why they were called Risen in the first place.

"Alright, then they'll be called Risen to help distinguish them," Chrom said.

Good. I wouldn't want them to for some reason call them the spooky soldiers with red eyes or something else stupid.

"Since we're done now, milord, shall we set up camp again or start up in our journey back to the capitol again?" Frederick asked wanting to know what to start preparing for.

"After that rude awakening, I'd say that we'd all have a hard time falling back asleep in this forest. We shall start our march for the capitol again. This event might've spread there so we should make haste," Chrom said while starting up in the march.

"Aw~. I hardly got any rest at all," Lissa whined while following her brother.

"If you'd like I can carry you back, my dear," Virion said while trying to catch up to Lissa.

"You touch the girl and I break your arms," Sully said while her horse trotted close behind Virion causing him to halt any advances he might've tried on Lissa.

"Please wait, milord! There are a few stones in the path! Allow me to remove them," Frederick shouted from the back of the group as he tried to hurry to the front on his horse.

"I'm the tactician of a strange army," Robin said with a smirk while following the group of marchers in their odd… march.

The strange antics of the Shepherds after a deadly battle strangely brought a smirk to my own face. I had a hard time not laughing because of them.

Suddenly Auden walked past me while asking, "You just going to let us leave ya behind? You'd best hurry lest you want to wind up bear food."

His statement made my smirk disappear as I shouted, "Bears don't go around eating people!"

He laughed at this as he responded with, "If that's what you think, then why don't you wait here and find out?"

Suddenly, various sounds of different creatures resonated throughout the forest that I was being carelessly left behind in. I found myself looking around frantically as I worried what those sounds could possibly belong to.

I then started to run as fast as I can to catch up with the group while shouting, "Wait! Don't leave me behind!"

And another chapter comes to a close. This one managed to be a bit longer than the second one surprisingly.

Anyways, so Vincent and Auden have now grouped up with the rest of the Shepherds. I toyed around with the thought of them not doing so but being in a corpse filled forest put them at a disadvantage. Thus I had Lucina come in to effectively save the day and cause Auden to sneakily follow her back to the others. Having them split up again after facing a mob of dead dudes would've been idiotic.

So the next chapter is going to be a training chapter for deal old Vincent. I'll say now, this training is going to be pretty critical. There will more than likely be some breaking of Vincent in it.

Either way, I expect that chapter to be ready around Monday with my estimates. In the meantime, why don't you guys take a guess as to who will be doing the training? I'm sure it'll surprise you all.

So leave a review on what you thought about the chapter. They're always helpful even if they might be about how terrible the chapter in question is.

Chapter 4: Helpful Training

As I predicted, this chapter was completed on Monday.

So I'm going to respond to some reviews at the end of this chapter since I want to and because I can. Warning you now if you don't care about reading my responses or if you're looking for them.

That's about all I'll be saying now. Enjoy this here chapter.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Helpful Training

The walk back to the capitol of Ylisse, Ylisstol, wasn't nearly as difficult as I thought it would be. We had decided to continue in the march in the middle of the night after everyone, except for Lissa, agreed on it. I might've been complaining alongside Lissa if it weren't for the fact that I oddly didn't feel all that tired. I couldn't explain why I felt this way, but I definitely didn't need to go back to sleep. Perhaps it's because I had just gone to sleep in the real world?

Either way, we made it to the capitol a couple of hours after the break of dawn surprisingly. We made it past the town's entrance and wandered into the streets of the town.

Let me first say that Ylisstol is far larger than Southtown and that was having its impact on both me and Robin. We were both looking back and forth as we past countless people on the street. The buildings and small little market stands were abundant as well. It was almost impossible to not see one on any street. There was also a surprising amount of people in carriages being wheeled by horses. More than likely they were traveling merchants or maybe even just plain travelers. That still didn't change the fact that this town was bustling.

"So many," I started to say in wonder as Robin finished my sentence also in wonder with, "people."

Lissa giggled at Robin and my reactions to the number of citizens wandering around us.

Auden then looked to me in confusion and said, "I can understand the amnesiac's reasons but you, Vince? Have you never been to the capitol?"

This threw me off guard slightly as I realized just what I was doing.

Crap. I really screwed myself now! How do I explain this?! Bullshit? Yeah, that sounds good enough.

"I've never really been here, no," I said while I sheepishly rubbed my head.

"Then where are you from?" Auden continued to ask.

A better question is where I can be from. Well, in some of the maps there are sometimes little villages in them. I guess I could be from one of those abundant nameless villages. Here's to hopefully not having to bullshit a village name.

"Ah… A real small village a bit to the north of here," I said in an attempt of lying once again.

"Huh, what about your parents? Aren't they going to be worried about you joining a bunch of soldiers?" Lissa asked in concern.

This caught me slightly off guard because of the fact that my parents aren't actually in this world. This caused me to respond in confusion with, "Parents?"

Auden gave me a strange look before I recovered with, "Oh, yeah. They won't mind. I disappear from the village a lot and they don't worry about me anymore."

Auden and a few others in the group looked at me with strange looks until they shrugged my answer off and returned to walking normally.

Can we stop now? I don't like playing ask me twenty questions that I have to lie in order to answer.

"It would seem the capitol did not face the mayhem we did, thank the gods. There also appears to be no signs of the

quake. It might have only occurred in the forest," Frederick said while leading the way through the streets on his horse.

Yeah, it would have kind of sucked to find this place in ruins for some odd reason.

"Look!" One of the villagers shouted while pointing further down the street, "The exalt is coming to see us!"

The villagers around us that heard this then ran down in the direction towards their ruler with wide smiles.

These guys get pretty happy about being looked at, don't they?

As the villagers ran down the streets, I was able to spot past them their exalt, Emmeryn, walking in the streets ahead of us. She was surrounded by what would appear to be her own guard which included priests, cavalry, and Pegasus knights by the look of it. It wasn't a very large guard but it was present nonetheless.

I guess a looming war would cause need for some protection.

Emmeryn walked among the commoners with a smile that could heal one's wounds if they had any. As she would pass the commoners she would wave and smile to as many of them as she could. Every citizen seemed to be perfectly content with her actions even if they were missed.

Her stature of elegance definitely added to the number of reasons why people look up to her. It certainly did prove why she was such a loved ruler.

"So the exalt is your guy's ruler?" Robin asked the group.

"Yes, her name is Lady Emmeryn," Frederick answered while stopping the group's march to allow Emmeryn to deal with the citizens uninterrupted.

"And according to Auden she's Chrom's sister which would make her Lissa's as well," Robin said as he analyzed the situation.

"That's right! She's an amazing sister at that," Lissa stated energetically.

"Then… that would make you and Chrom…!" Robin shouted as he realized what this all meant. He was cut off, however, by Frederick finishing his sentence for him, "Prince and princess of this realm, yes."

"How do you remember Chrom's name and none of this?" Frederick asked with a hint of paranoia.

"But I thought you guys were "shepherds"," Robin said in confusion.

"As we are… we just happen to have a lot of sheep to herd," Chrom stated while laughing slightly.

"P-Prince Chrom, please forgive my ignorance! Had I know I would've-" Robin started to almost grovel before he was stopped by Chrom.

"Just Chrom will do. Formalities don't work too well with me," Chrom said with a smile as he stopped Robin.

Robin then started to recover as he said, "My apologies, Prin- I mean, Chrom…"

"Prince and princess… I suppose that makes sense. It certainly proves why Frederick deals with all the constant teasing," Robin said with a small smirk as he looked at the great knight in front of him.

Frederick let out an audible sigh as he stated, "Yes, the things I sacrifice for the betterment of our realm."

The group laughed slightly at Frederick's misery but quickly died down as we returned to watching Emmeryn walking through the city.

I can't help it. Nobody else is asking it so I guess I will.

"I don't mean to give in to paranoia, but is it exactly safe for her to be walking around the capitol like this?" I asked the group.

"The exalt is a symbol of peace—Ylisse's most prized excellence. Long ago, at the dawn of our age, the fell dragon tried to destroy the world. The first exalt, however, joined forces with the divine dragon and laid the beast low. Lady Emmeryn helps remind us all of the peace we fought for back then," Frederick answered without hesitation.

After finally wading through the mob of citizens, Emmeryn was heading off to a rather intimidatingly sized castle with her guard in tow.

"It looks like Emm is heading back to the castle. Would you like to meet her?" Chrom asked his tactician Robin.

"Me? No, no. I couldn't possibly head into a royal castle," Robin said as he waved off Chrom's generous offer.

"I'd think differently. As the tactician of the Shepherds, you'll have to head into a lot more castles than just this. Best to get used to it early." Chrom stated with a smile.

"Uh… If that's the case, then sure! I'll come with!" Robin stated happily.

"Great! Then let's go!" I said as I tried to lead the group back into a march towards the castle.

The back of my shirt was then grabbed by somebody as they pulled me back and lifted me slightly off the ground. When I turned to see who had done such a thing, I met eyes with Frederick whom was still seated up on his horse.

"H-Hey! What's the deal, Frederick?" I asked feeling slightly annoyed.

"Sorry, Vincent, but you actually can't come with," Chrom answered for Frederick.

What?!

"Why can't I go?!" I asked while trying to get out of Frederick's hold on my shirt.

"Well, Auden actually requested that you head to the Shepherds HQ and get started training right away. He said something about you being in desperate need of some helpful pointers," Chrom said as he recalled his conversation Auden had with him.

I then directed my attention to the beard man himself and, sure enough, he was standing there with a wide grin while he shrugged his shoulders.

"S-So what does that mean?!" I asked while Frederick let me go.

"Well, Sully will take you, Virion, and Auden back to our HQ. Don't worry. I've already informed her of who would be perfect as your training partner," Chrom answered before heading off to the castle with the others.

The rest of us meant to head to the Shepherds HQ were left behind. We stood around in the middle of the street until Sully and her horse started to walk away as she said, "Well, you lot want to stand around or are you going to start moving your asses and follow me?"

Virion was unsurprisingly fast in following Sully as he said from behind her, "I'd follow you to the ends of the world, Sully!"

While me and Auden went to catch up with the two, I glared daggers at Auden and asked, "Helpful pointers… really?"

Auden laughed in amusement as he rhetorically asked, "What's the matter? Rather get some pointers from an enemy's spear?"

Regrettably, I understood what he was getting at. I'd rather be trained to live than be left to try and survive.

I stopped my glaring and replied, "Duly noted."

Our group of now four continued through the streets of Ylisstol as we were led by Sully. We soon enough passed the palace in our march. We didn't stop there, however, as we continued past the castle and exited out the city.

"Uh… We're still heading to the headquarters?" I asked in slight worry of where we were really going.

"Of course we are ya idiot! I know the way!" Sully shouted back to me.

"A-Alright!" I yelled in a reply.

Do not make Sully angry. Do not make her angry. Please don't make her angry.

I calmed myself as I decided to ask another more sensible question, "So… Where is it then?"

"It's right down there. Don't your eyes work?" Sully asked while she pointed in our destination.

I raised my hands over my eyes to try and keep the sun out of them while I looked for the building. There was indeed a building at the bottom of the hill we were currently walking down. It looked a bit larger than I had been expecting. Also, it didn't exactly scream being a building for a war party to me.

"That's it? What is that? A manse or something?" I asked in confusion of the size of the building that seemed to get larger as we got closer.

Sully smirked at my questions as she asked, "Bit too big for a village boy like you?"

"N-No! Not at all! It's just… odd?... for a building that big to be your guy's headquarters I think. That's all," I answered the smiling Sully.

Sully laughed in amusement as she replied, "That's why we picked it!"

"Huh?" I said in confusion.

We had almost reached the bottom of the hill and thus were closer to the headquarters.

"Chrom wouldn't settle for any less when picking a building for our headquarters. He wanted to plan for the future of the Shepherds which he saw as a big one. Thus, we got a big building," Sully explained while she smirked.

I guess if you think about it, it makes sense kind of in the end. The Shepherds do become a pretty big deal. It makes sense that they would need a big headquarters for their huge future.

"So why are you guys based outside the capitol? Wouldn't it make more sense to be inside the capitol?" I continued to ask questions.

Sully, however, didn't seem to mind them that much as she continued to wear a smirk.

"Would you want to keep a war party that constantly breaks stuff in their own barracks inside a city?" Sully rhetorically asked.

"I guess you have a point," I stated.

At the end of my questions, we made it to the bottom of the hill outside the capitol. Our march ended shortly at the front doors to the Shepherd's headquarters.

"You guys wait here. I'm just going to swing around back real quick," Sully told us before trotting around towards the back of the manse on her horse.

Oddly enough, it looked like there was some stables back the way she went.

I guess the building has a no horse policy.

Sully returned shortly with no horse and invited us inside the headquarters. Our group headed inside without hesitation.

The inside of the building was… different?... than what I had expected.

The very first room we entered wasn't quite what one would call organized. Crates and barrels lined some of the walls while bags of various other supplies were thrown about carelessly. Some crates were even moved around to provide for seats I think? I say this because there appeared to be a man sitting on one of the random crates right now. He looked like he was asleep while sitting up. He had some crazy blonde hair tied back and wore no shirt at all. He seemed to be a muscular individual; which probably assisted him in holding the large axe he had lying next to the crate he was sleeping on. Also, he had on large leather guards on both of his legs and one of his arms. Perhaps the one on his arm could be used as a partial shield?

That guy had to be the oaf Vaike.

Back to describing the room, there was candles laid about to provide for some kind of lighting. Also, lying around on the floor were various books. The overall appearance this HQ gives off to me is that it could be organized but it doesn't appear to be.

"Finally," a new voice shouted from the other side of the room.

Our group looked to the source of the voice and was met by a young woman with blonde hair that held bows in it. Her clothing appeared to be definitely something a noble of this time period would be seen wearing. Pink and white seemed

to be the general color scheme while she wore high heel boots I believe. She carried a parasol closed in one of her hands as she walked towards us in an elegant manner.

She stopped in her elegant walk as she asked, "Sully, where is Lissa? She has been gone for far too long!"

"Hello to you too, Maribelle," Sully replied with a grin.

"Hello?! Hello does not inform me of Lissa's whereabouts!" Maribelle yelled in worry.

"Jeez… you don't have to yell in my ear," Sully said while cleaning out her ear with one of her fingers. She flicked off something she got out and answered, "The girl went to the castle. She'll be back later. Right now," She motioned to Auden, Virion, and me, "we have some new recruits."

"Meet Auden, Virion and, Vincenet." Sully said while pointing to each one of us in turn.

"Yes, yes. It is beautiful to see more ruffians. Look, don't bother me and I won't bother you. Call me when my dear Lissa has returned," Maribelle stated before walking up some stairs.

"The girl can be a stickler, but she really does have a heart even if it doesn't look like it," Sully explained after Maribelle went up to the second floor.

"Oh you're finally back-"A new voice broke through the air until it was drowned out by a loud clattering noise.

A short distance in front of us was a woman sprawled out on the ground. She had gotten a face full of the stone that was this building's floor.

"Is she hurt?" I asked in concern.

"Don't worry about her," Sully explained while walking over to the girl on the floor. She grabbed the woman by one of her arms and jerked her up.

"Ow. Ow. Ow," the girl yelped while being pulled to her feet.

"You have to be more careful, Sumia. Try and watch where you're going next time," Sully said to the girl while dusting her off.

"Thank you, Sully. I'll try… It's just… these darn boots!" Sumia exclaimed while kicking her shoes into the floor beneath her.

She then seemed to have somehow injured herself as she yelped in pain and gripped onto her foot while she hopped around in a comical way.

Sully laughed quietly at Sumia's clumsiness and decided it would be best to stop the girl before she injured herself some more.

Sully grabbed Sumia and kept her from bouncing around anymore. She then said, "You should just stay still."

"R-Right… That would be best, wouldn't it?" Sumia asked as she gave Sully a smile while she let go of her foot and stood normally.

"Well, before anything else crazy happens why don't you meet the new guys?" Sully asked Sumia while she presented Auden, Virion, and me.

Auden was watching the situation with amusement while Virion was fixing his hair to make himself look more presentable. I, on the other hand, was standing awkwardly in the middle of the two without any idea on what I should be doing.

"O-Oh, we have new recruits?" Sumia asked.

"That's what I said. Did you hit your head too hard or something?" Sully asked Sumia while she checked her head.

Sumia nervously shook her head back and forth to stop Sully's examination. As Sully stopped she gave a smile and waved to us new recruits. She then said, "My name's Sumia. It'll be nice to have new faces around the building."

Oddly, her smile seemed to almost calm me. In a way, I feel like it did that to everyone. Her smile just felt warm. As if, it was the epitome of warming smiles. A smile that was one hundred percent genuine.

Even though Sumia seemed to have a calming aura, it didn't stop Virion from trying to put the moves on her.

"The name's Virion, my darling. I do look forward to seeing you around as well," Virion stated as he bowed to Sumia.

This action seemed to weird Sumia out as she didn't quite know what to do. Before Virion could try anything else, Sully shot him a death glare that froze him in place.

"My name's Auden, little girl. I'll try to keep this place from stinking like old man," Auden said before he busted into laughter from what I believe was a joke he made. A joke he made about himself? I have no idea. I've realized that Auden is too strange to understand by this point. It's best not to question his ways.

Nonetheless, Sumia found Auden's joke, or maybe him, to be amusing enough to giggle too. She stopped her giggles and faced me. Seemingly, she was awaiting a response.

"A-Ah, right… me… Well, my name's Vincent and I hope to provide some kind of assistance," I said as I nervously rubbed my head.

Sumia clapped her hands together and exclaimed, "Excellent! I'm glad that we have so many new people joining us!"

Sumia then walked away with a smile on her face as she headed for the same stairs that Maribelle went up. She stopped at the bottom of the steps and turned to face Sully. She said, "I'm going to go and rest for a little Sully."

"No problem, Sumia. I'm sure you and the others have had it hard while the others and I have been gone," Sully replied.

Sumia gave another warming smile before she turned to head up the stairs again. Before she could get up the first step, however, she tripped and fell face first onto them. Every surrounding person was about to rush to assist her before she managed to recover on her own stating, "I-I'm fine! It's just… the step… it was a bit higher than I thought!"

She got up as she laughed it off as one big joke before she hurried up the rest of them in a flash.

"The girl's a bit clumsy, but she has a heart of gold. I'm sure you'll find yourselves warming up to her real quick," Sully explained as she walked further into the room.

Sully was walking straight for the man who was still asleep on one of the crates in the room. He had slept through all of the commotion that had been going on in the room.

If that wasn't Vaike, I'd shoot myself for being wrong.

"Vaike!" Sully shouted into Vaike's ear while he slept.

Called it.

This startled the blonde axe wielder as he feel backwards off of his crate and onto the ground. He then shot up while grabbing his axe shouting, "What's going on?! Is the Vaike being attacked?!"

Auden and I laughed at Vaike's reactions which caused him to go out of battle mode as he wondered aloud, "Are people laughing at the Vaike?"

"You're not under attack you moron. We've got new recruits," Sully said while bopping Vaike on the head with her fist.

Sully went through the effort of introducing us three new recruits again to the previously sleeping Vaike who seemed ecstatic.

He's probably so happy because he has more people to fight.

"We've got more recruits, huh? Alright, listen up cause I'm only gonna say this once! I'm Teach and you'll all be fighting me three on one right now!" Vaike shouted as he got in a battle ready stance with his axe.

Called it again! I'm two for two!

Sully had to bop Vaike on the head once again to calm him down as she explained, "You're not fighting them all. Actually, you only get to fight one."

"What?! Why does the Vaike only get one! Don't be underestimating my power!" Vaike said as he pounded his chest with his fist.

"You get one because you're going to train him!" Sully shouted angrily in Vaike's ear giving the man slight shell shock.

"You're training Vincent, alright? Take him out back and tell Stahl to stop lazing around. He's a knight for cryin' out loud," Sully ordered before heading up the same stairs Maribelle went up a bit ago.

W-Wait. Vaike. Is. Training. Me. Why. The. Fuck. Is. Vaike training me?!

Come on! Seriously?! Not even Robin or something!? He apparently knows how to use a sword even though he lacks any memories! Plus the guy's got G- Ok they don't know that but he still is a better partner than Vaike!

"Alright , Vince, you heard the lady. Ol' Teach here is going to train you into next week!" Vaike exclaimed enthusiastically as he went towards a door out the back of the building.

This is what I'm being trained by…

"You coming or what? Ol' Teach can't do this all day!" Vaike said as he waited for me at the door.

"Yeah, I'm coming, Teach." I replied in disappointment as I walked slowly to head out with Vaike.

We went out the door and proceeded past the stables. Our walk continued until we reached a large area of flat land with a single tree in the middle of it. Underneath the tree looked to be a figure, but I couldn't discern who it was.

There was also a small shed and a small well to the left of us just before the large flat land that Vaike immediately went towards. He unlocked the door to the shed and opened it. He then grabbed a couple of things before locking the door again.

Vaike returned to me with two western styled wooden swords in both of his hands. He extended one to me with a grin. I took the wooden sword from his hand and gave a few swings.

At least this should be easy. I'd hope.

Vaike then held onto his wooden sword while he let it rest on his shoulder. He grinned to me while he motioned for me to follow him.

We proceeded further into the middle of the flat land until we were at the tree. I was then finally able to fully see who was lying on the tree. It was a man in cavalry style armor similar to Sully's except his had a green streaks to it instead of red. He had messy black hair and had a bronze sword along with a small shield next to him.

That had to be Stahl.

Stahl slept carelessly under the tree as Vaike and I neared him.

Vaike then called out, "Yo, Stahl!"

This reached Stahl's ears as he cracked open an eye before he fully awoke. He sat up when we reached the tree he was under and stretched. He let out an audible yawn before asking, "Vaike… What's going on?"

"It's time to clear out, Stahl! Teach here is about to cause some chaos and doesn't want to see you getting hurt!" Vaike answered while smirking.

"Oh you're going to use the training field? I guess I fell asleep out here, huh?" Stahl asked while gathering his gear and standing up.

Both Vaike and I nodded in affirmation to his questions.

"Oh well. I was starting to get a little hungry anyways. Hey, who's the new guy?" Stahl asked Vaike.

"I'm Vincent. I'm a new recruit for the Shepherds," I answered while extending my hand to Stahl.

It's not that I find Stahl to be a great character despite his lack of actual use in the game. Ok, it is that.

Stahl smiled as he took my hand and responded, "Nice to meet you, Vincent. My name's Stahl."

We released each other's hands from our short handshake and then Stahl started to walk away from me and Vaike.

"Field's all yours guys," Stahl said as he walked towards the Shepherd's HQ.

With Stahl having left the field, Vaike got ready to fight me with his wooden sword as he asked, "Are ya ready for the Vaike?"

I gripped my wooden sword with both of my hands in contrast to Vaike's one handed style and answered, "It's now or never I suppose."

Vaike didn't wait for a single second as he came bolting towards me screaming like a mad man. I'll be frank, this caught me way off guard. Quite honestly, I didn't think he would get that into the training.

Vaike neared the startled me and smacked my left arm with his sword in a quick swipe. He stood victorious as I rubbed the surely now bruised left arm I had.

"One point for the Vaike! Score: 1-0!" Vaike shouted proudly.

How is this guy going to help train me?!

"Redo! I want a redo!" I shouted while getting ready with my sword again.

"The reigning champ, Teach, is being challenged once again? He accepts your challenge!' Vaike replied before he readied himself as well.

Ok, the guy's going to try and throw you off again. Just have to ignore his crazed yells.

As predicted, Vaike came at me while screaming like a maniac again. He got to me and swung his sword at me. While I wasn't exactly accustomed to the constant noise he was making, I wasn't caught off guard by it this time.

I brought up my own sword to block his attack and was surprisingly successful. However, he didn't let up in his attacks or his screams. It was as though a battle against both my body and mind were being waged.

He continued in his swings, this time aiming for my head which was unguarded. While I could feel myself becoming disoriented from his voice, I managed to duck under his attack.

My first instinct was to go for an attack on Vaike while I was below his guard.

I've got you now! I'll hit you while I'm down here! You'll never block this!

Before I even had a chance to ready my sword in an attack, however, Vaike did the unthinkable. When I ducked to dodge his attack, he stopped in his swing and brought up his arm in front of his chest. He then brought up his other arm effectively crossing it over his sword wielding arm. Both of his arms crossed to make an x across his chest and he lowered himself down to my level. His arm with the leather guard was on top of his other arm to provide some kind of shielding I'd assume.

What in the hell is this crazy guy doing!?

He then charged into me with his body and knocked me onto my back. Then he uncrossed his arms and stabbed his sword into my gut before I had a chance to recover. The resulting blow knocked the wind out of me and left me gasping for air for the next few seconds.

Meanwhile, Vaike exclaimed joyfully, "The Vaike continues in his spree! Score: 2-0!"

Seriously… this is… my trainer?

I managed to regain my breath as I stood up. At this point I was almost brimming with anger. I held onto my gut while I held my wooden sword in my other hand and asked him in slight frustration, "What was that?!"

"That was me winning! You might want to get used to it. It's a pretty common thing around here for me to win!" Vaike said while he spun his wooden sword around in circles.

"No, that was dirty! That was downright cheap to body check me like that!" I shouted in anger.

"Dirty? You think bandits give a crap about that? I sure don't," Vaike said as he got slightly serious for once.

His response slightly calmed me as I could understand what he was getting at. It still didn't fully calm me though. For him to pull out all the stops against a newbie like me is ridiculous. It's like playing in a kid's baseball game as an adult and pitching speed balls to the little kids. It's downright unfair and won't help them improve in the slightest.

Still, I should've known Vaike wouldn't hold back. If I remember correctly, the guy doesn't even know the meaning of "fighting safe".

I'll just have to watch out for any dirty tricks he might pull.

"You giving up?" Vaike asked.

"No, we're just getting started," I said as I readied my sword once again.

"Good cause the Vaike still needs to break a sweat before he can call it a day," Vaike replied as he too readied himself.

The two of us stood in the middle of the field for a few seconds before Vaike came charging for me. This time he didn't scream my ears out. Perhaps he screamed his voice out?

Either way he came in to attack me. He swung his sword for me to which I parried with my own. I went for a swing on him that was aimed for his head. My sword was coming up in an arc to my right towards his head. Before my sword could connect, however, he ducked under my swing and popped his head back up after my swing past.

Vaike then went for another swing against my body before I could recover from my swing. His sword was coming towards me from my left so I decided to side step to my right where my body was already partially heading. I, however, met resistance in the form of Vaike's foot as he had stuck it out to trip me. He succeeded as I tripped over his foot and fell flat on my stomach.

I tried to flip myself over and protect myself on the ground before he could attack me, but when I flipped onto my back I saw that Vaike already had his sword pointed at me. He could've hit me by now, but decided not to.

He looked at me with disappointment as he pulled his sword away from pointing at me. He then started to walk away without uttering word.

I shouted to him, "Where are you heading?!"

Vaike stopped in his tracks as he turned to face me again. Still the look of disappointment was plastered on his face. He then replied, "I'm done here. Sorry, Vince, but I don't see any potential in you. I think you should quit trying to be a Shepherd."

W-What did he say? No, no. I know what he said, but is he serious?

"W-Why? I'm a perfectly able soldier to do this! I've survived at least two encounters before I even got here! How can you decide I have no place here?!" I asked in anger while I stood up to my feet.

"You explained it yourself. You survived those encounters," Vaike said as he pointed his wooden sword at me.

His words hit me like a wrecking ball. I was stunned. Mortified to say the least. Thinking back to those last encounters, I knew he was right. All I had been doing was surviving my previous encounters. I hadn't done a thing to provide any kind of real assistance. In fact, I had almost killed a person in one of them that I tried to help in! How did I think I could be in a war party?! No, a better question would be why I thought I could be in a war party to begin with!

I stumbled backwards from the shock of the realization and fell onto my ass. I dropped the wooden sword in my hand as I furiously grabbed a handful of grass next to me.

The sudden realization had come to me. I had thought that I could play the hero people always see in movies and video games but I was wrong. I was dead wrong. I was nothing more than a useless piece of skin that's true purpose in life was to live out an average life. An average, uneventful, mediocre life. An average life for a person that dreamed to be something more.

What… What the fuck was I thinking? What the fuck was I thinking?!

I punched the ground to my side multiple times as I felt my anger boiling. Anger that was directed solely at myself.

I hadn't the first clue on how to be a hero. It didn't matter that I fell into a game. Even if this was the real world I would've wanted to try the same idiotic thing. All that did matter was my foolish dreams of heroic deeds. Deeds that might pull me out of a normal life. I should've known that these deeds would never be possible for me though. Even if I am getting pulled into a video game.

"Is this what you want to be?" I heard Vaike ask.

His words suddenly broke me from my fit of rage and sadness as I stopped hitting the ground to look up to him. I asked him, "What are you talking about?"

"This mess you've become. Do you want to be this or something else?" Vaike asked.

I took a moment to calm myself long enough before I could look myself over. I was a raging idiot that had decided it would be best to take out his anger on the ground. A fool that decided all other options must be out the window.

I looked back to Vaike as I answered, "No… No, it isn't."

"Then what is it you want to be?" Vaike asked.

Ii took me a minute to answer him with, "I'm… I'm trying to be like you guys!"

He then took a step closer to me as he punched a fist against his chest. He exclaimed, "Then do it!"

His reply shook me almost as much as the one that put me on the ground. I asked in confusion, "B-But didn't you tell me that I couldn't?"

"That's where you failed the Vaike's strenuous training program! First rule: Never let anyone tell you what you can or can't do!"

"I… I don't quite understand," I said as I fell into more confusion.

"You can't let people go around telling you what you can do, Vince! If the Vaike did, then I would probably still be living in the streets!" Vaike said.

"Then why did you tell me in the first place?" I asked in more confusion.

"Because I'm training you that's why! Before I can teach you anything I have to build up your confidence first! Otherwise, you're no match for ol' Teach," Vaike exclaimed.

"I don't get it… I'm not confident enough so I can't beat you?" I asked still in confusion as I started to scratch my head in wonder.

Vaike started to get annoyed with all of my questions as he furiously scratched his own head before he recovered and asked calmly, "The way you fight… How well do you think you fight?"

"I think I do decent enough…" I said as I picked up the sword next to me and looked it over.

"Wrong!" I heard Vaike shout which caused me to drop the sword out of my hands.

"You aren't fighting at all! The Vaike knows fighting and you aren't doing it! Your confidence shows in your fighting. Think about how you've been fighting!" Vaike said as he pointed his wooden sword at me once again.

Well, I do a lot of blocking and I don't really charge many things. Actually, I don't charge things unless I have the flank on them. I really avoid frontal battles. I turtle it up and hope to find a break in people's attacks.

"So I need to change how I fight?" I asked.

"Exactly! You need to be more aggressive! I can tell you're an angry dude, so why not show it more? Like when I told you that you shouldn't be a Shepherd! You should've decked me in the face!" Vaike said while he shadow bowed.

I grabbed ahold of my wooden sword once again and raised myself off the ground. I held it in both my hands as I faced Vaike.

"Alright, I can do that. I kind of feel like beating the crap out of you for crushing my self-esteem just now anyways," I stated with a grin.

"What? I told you the Vaike was already done! You think the Vaike jokes?" Vaike asked with a smirk.

"Good, it only means you won't fight back while I kick your ass," I replied.

Vaike grinned as he too got ready to start a fight. He then said, "You think so huh?"

I charged for Vaike as he did the same towards me. We both started to yell at the top of our lungs as we continued in our

mad charges. When I was close enough, I swung my wooden sword as he did the very same. Our swords collided and we both recoiled off each other's attacks. Vaike grinned to me and I did the same to him.

After recovering from my recoil, I swung for Vaike once again. He blocked my once again with his own sword.

He then went for a punch to my face with his right hand that I swiftly backed away from. I then returned his attack with another swing with my sword. This time I went for a downward vertical attack aimed for the top of his head. Vaike raised his wooden sword horizontally to block and was successful in his attempt as my sword bashed against his own.

I kept the pressure on him as I continued to hold my sword against his. He was unable to move his sword or else I would smack him on the top of his head. He, however, was handling the pressure perfectly fine with one hand on his sword and a smirk on his face.

He'll try something… I knew it!

As easily predicted, Vaike tried to knee me in the gut while I was focusing on my sword. I backed away to barely avoid receiving a knee to the gut as Vaike went on the offensive. He swung for my left side with his sword as I backed away from him. He was just barely out of range in his attack thanks to my backpedaling.

The attacks didn't stop there though. He came in for another swing on my right this time. This time he was aiming for my shoulder. I barely managed to parry his attack to my right which had his guard wide open.

Or at least I had thought he was open. As I went in for an attack, Vaike swung his right hand for me once again. He was dead set on punching me sooner or later. I barely managed to pull back from my attack to dodge his incoming attack.

Vaike came towards me with relentless attacks. He was putting me in the type of situation he wanted. One where I tried to block his attacks. It was the way he wanted it. I wouldn't be able to make an attack if he just kept pressure on me.

Vaike then came at me with an horizontal swing for my head. I had found an opening. I ducked under his attack and proceeded to run under his sword arm for his flank.

I'm sure he'll try to… yup, there it is.

Vaike had made the attempt to stick his foot out to trip me but I went too far from his leg's reach for him to effectively trip me. I made it behind him and went in for the swing. He still hadn't made any attempt to move or block me. I was certain to hit him.

Just as my sword neared Vaike's shoulder, I felt an incredible amount of force strike me into the gut. When I looked down at the source, I had found that it was Vaike's wooden sword. He stabbed behind himself to hit me before I could hit him. I was only inches away too!

Vaike turned his head slightly to see if he had struck me or not and was pleased to see that he did. He then turned fully around and exclaimed triumphantly, "The Vaike wins again! Score: 3-0!"

"Damn… I was… so close too," I said in ragged breaths.

"Don't worry about it, Vince! I'm a lot to handle at first! You'll catch me eventually," Vaike said as he patted my back in reassurance.

"I don't know who… told you we were done. Cause I'm sure not," I replied as I got ready to fight again.

I'm going to change that zero on the scoreboard.

Vaike was a little surprised by my resolve to continue training but he recovered as he became excited.

"The Vaike don't mind! He can do this all day," Vaike stated with a grin as he too readied himself for the fifth time today.

/\/\/\/\/\/\

Time passed by slowly as Vaike and I sparred throughout the remainder of the day. Our constant yells earned us a few yells back from a rather annoyed Mairbelle that had just about enough of our training. Nonetheless, we carried on with what would be the most brutal kind of training I had ever experienced in my life. Not that I've been trained that much to begin with.

The sun started to set below the horizon as the field Vaike and I were in changed from a bright green color to a deep orange in a matter of minutes. The previously warm atmosphere we were in soon started to drop in temperatures as

night drew closer and closer.

During the middle of the training, I saw that both Chrom and even Auden had come out to check on me and Vaike. They didn't say anything, but decided to leave when they had seen enough.

Battered, bruised and completely tuckered out, I slumped down against the tree that took the middle of the open plain we trained in. Vaike came to the tree as well and slumped down on the other side of the tree. Even he was breathing raggedly like I was.

"You know… you really messed me up back there," I said in an exhausted state to the equally exhausted Vaike.

"Yeah? Good, cause that's… what the Vaike is supposed to do!" Vaike said as he laughed the whole situation off.

Realistically, I gave the muscular idiot no visible wounds at all. Quite frankly, all I managed to do was tucker the guy out. On the other hand, Vaike left me battered to no end. All across my body I felt sorer than ever before as he landed blow after blow on my body. I was certain to be seeing some bruises on my body.

Still, even though he injured me beyond imagination. I deeply appreciated it. While I can't say is methods are the best, they definitely worked. I feel much more confident in fighting than I did before. I don't feel as though I might be that much better at it, but it helped to have confidence.

"You good?" Vaike asked as he twisted his head around the tree to see me on the other side, "You're doing better, right? Ol' Teach sure has one killer training program, doesn't he?"

"Yeah," I replied with a smile, "I'm doing better. Thanks, Vaike."

"But…" I said as I managed to stand up, "I wouldn't mind kicking your ass again in the future. Have to repay you for these wounds sometime."

Vaike grinned as he also stood up. He then said, "Oh yeah! The Vaike is always up for so more competition! It's how the best get even better! The score's 15-5 so don't you forget it!"

"I think I will. Because that score's going to be 15-16 real soon," I replied with a grin.

"Ha! Keep dreaming, pal!" Vaike said energetically before walking towards the Shepherd's HQ. He stopped midway as he looked back to me and asked, "Well, don't you wanna eat somethin'?"

"Yeah, I'd like to eat! What do you take me for? A training dummy?" I asked with a smirk as I went to catch up with Vaike.

"With the way you train? Yeah, I think you just might be one!" Vaike said with a laugh as I caught up to him.

I pushed him to the side in annoyance of his answer and he returns it with a push of one of his own. His push almost caused me to fall over, but I managed to keep my balance.

"Hey, Vince, drink this," Vaike said as he pulled a small flask out of his pouch he had strapped to his side.

The flask had some kind of slightly sparkling blue liquid inside it. It was held inside the flask thanks to a cork that was secured on top of it.

"Uh… What's that?" I asked.

Vaike laughed at my question and responded, "What? Never seen a vulnerary before? Just drink it ya idiot!"

He forced the vulnerary into my hand in a flash. I was left staring at the peculiar drink in my hands as we walked.

This is a vulnerary? I hope it doesn't taste like crap.

I uncorked the flask in my hands and took a swig of the contents inside. The taste… was abdominal. I spit out the drink immediately and tried my best to get the taste out of my mouth.

"This tastes like-" I was cut off by Vaike laughing loudly and finishing my sentence with, "Crap?"

"Yeah, it tastes awful. Even I can't stand the taste! Still, you'll feel like a cleric just healed ya!" Vaike said.

I looked back at the uncorked flask as I stirred the contents of it.

The stuff tastes like ass, but if it can heal me like it does in the game then I suppose I can handle it.

I took another quick swig of the vulnerary in my hand and forced myself to swallow it. I quickly corked the flask again as I gave the rest of the vulnerary back to Vaike. He took the flask as I gagged from the horrible taste that went through my mouth for the second time.

My gagging stopped soon as I lost the horrible taste and my body started to feel oddly better. The sore feeling that had once covered most of my arms and legs had vanished. It would appear the vulnerary can at least do its job.

"Feels better right?" Vaike asked.

"Yeah, but I would never sell this thing as a beverage," I replied.

Vaike laughed in amusement as he said, "Yeah, they say not to drink the stuff anyways."

"What?! Then why the heck did you make me drink it?!" I asked in slight frustration.

"Huh?" Vaike said as he rubbed his head in confusion.

"Vaike… if that stuff isn't supposed to be consumed, why did you make me do it?" I asked him this time a little slower.

"Oh! Well, they say you're supposed to rub the stuff on your injuries cause the stuff tastes like last month's dishwater!" Vaike explained with a smirk.

"Then why did you make me drink it?!" I asked again.

"Because that's the fast way to use the stuff! Ol' Teach doesn't have time for all that rubbing so he drinks the stuff!" Vaike answered in his own frustration at my frustration.

I… will get you back for this… Just you wait… Vaike.

"Whatever," I said as I waved off his frustration, "Thanks anyways for the… magical dishwater."

"No problem, pal!" Vaike said as he patted me on the back.

Payback… It's coming…

Vaike and I got to the back entrance to the Shepherd's HQ in a few more minutes. The sun had almost completely set when we made it to the door so it was practically perfect timing.

Vaike went to open the door when suddenly somebody else came running through the door. The door slammed into Vaike as the person running through came barreling into me. I managed to stop the individual's panic run as they collided with me. The individual in such a hurry was Stahl for some odd reason.

"Stahl, what's with the hurry!? You slammed a door in the Vaike's face!" Vaike said in frustration as he rubbed his face.

"Dinner… Dinner's being cooked… It's being cooked by…" Stahl said in between ragged breaths.

"Cooked by who?" I asked wanting him to finish what he was saying.

"It's being cooked by-" Stahl tried to answer after he recovered from his panic breathing but was cut off by another voice shouting from behind him, "Stahl, where do you think you're going?!"

The voice behind Stahl turned out to be Sully's as she walked up behind the fellow knight and grabbed him by the shoulder. This caused Stahl to be slightly shocked as he stiffened in front of me.

"I spent all this time cooking and you're not about to skip out on it," Sully said as she tightened her grip on Stahl's shoulder.

"Skip? No way! I'd never skip out on dinner! Who do you think you're talking to, Sully?" Stahl rhetorically asked with a nervous smile.

"Good," Sully said as she turned her direction to me, "Come on, Vincent. I've already cooked and served dinner. You don't want to eat cold food."

"O-Of course not!" I answered in fear of what's to come.

She's a terrible cook from what I know in the games! It'll probably be as bad as the vulnerary! Or even worse!

"Vaike," Sully said as she looked over my shoulder to see Vaike trying to sneak away, "Where do you think you're heading?"

Vaike tunred around and sheepishly scratched his head as he replied, "Ol' Teach was just… going for a swim! Yeah, I need to go swimming before the day's over!"

"In what body of water would you swim in?" Sully asked as there was obviously no body of water near here.

"Uh… Well… What I meant was…" Vaike tried to answer as he looked around nervously.

"I think you meant that you were coming back for dinner," Sully answered for Vaike as she pulled Stahl back inside the Shepherd's HQ. After getting Stahl back inside, she looked back out the door and shot a piercing glare at Vaike.

"Uh… um… Yeah… that's what I meant," Vaike said in defeat as he walked slowly into the HQ.

"Well, Vincent? Are you going for a swim or are you eating?" Sully asked me.

"I'll eat. No swimming here," I answered as I walked inside.

Sully lead the way to the dining table as Stahl, Vaike, and I trailed behind.

"So… this cooking… is it bad?" I asked Stahl in slight fear.

"I would eat a lot of edible things, but the stuff sully cooks isn't one of those things. Does that give you an idea?" Stahl asked after answering my question.

"Yeah, I guess; but why would she be allowed to cook then?" I asked him.

"Well, everybody kind of forgot about who was supposed to be cooking tonight, and I guess Sully took the responsibility herself which is odd because she doesn't even like doing this anyways," Stahl explained as we neared the dining table that was kept behind a wall in the main room.

The kitchen looked to be behind a wall opposite to the dining room probably for convenience.

We entered into the dining room, and took a seat with the rest of the Shepherds. Even Miriel and Ricken were here which was odd since they weren't here earlier. Or at least they didn't appear to have been.

On the table was an assortment of bowls and spoons for each person, a few candles thrown about to provide for light, and a giant pot in the middle of the table. Each bowl already appeared to have some kind of soup inside it already before Stahl, Vaike, and I arrived.

Sully stood behind her seat as she said, "I know I normally don't cook for a good reason, but I thought I'd give this new recipe a try to see if it was any good. So everybody dig in!"

She took a seat at her announcement to the start of the meal that nobody seemed to want to partake in. Everybody stared at their meals in front of them while they played around with their spoons. Not a single person took a bite of the odd smelling and looking soup in their bowls. Not even Sully who was nervously looking at her own bowl of odd soup.

Oh ho… this should be good.

I looked over to my side to see Vaike sitting next to me as he nervously played around with his food as well. I snickered silently as I had already thought of my payback for the muscled baboon.

"Hey, Vaike," I whispered silently to Vaike to catch his attention.

"What?" He asked as he continued stirring his bowl of soup.

"Bet you I can finish this stuff before you," I said trying to egg him into a competition.

"What?! You're going to eat this stuff?!" Vaike asked in an outburst.

"Yeah, I understand if you can't. It takes guts to do," I said quietly as I put a spoonful of the soup into my mouth to help convince him I was serious.

The taste was abysmal as I found it difficult not to spit the stuff out almost immediately. My eyes even almost started to water from the over spicing of the food. I, however, held on to my plain expression as I swallowed the spoonful.

Vaike looked at me with surprise as did some of the nearby Shepherds. He then looked back and forth between his bowl and me. In a stunning moment of his resolve to beat me, he picked up his bowl with his both his hands.

Vaike then exclaimed, "The Vaike has guts! Bring it on!"

I smirked at how easily he went in for my bait and dropped my spoon onto the table. I grabbed ahold of my bowl with both of my hands and raised it off the table as well. I then exclaimed, "Alright, on three! One, two, three!"

At my signal to start, Vaike put his bowl up to his lips as I did the same. He started to chug the soup down in great quantities while I merely held the bowl of soup at my lips. In a matter of seconds, Vaike had finished and slammed his bowl onto the table. He grinned victoriously as I sat my still full bowl of odd soup onto the table and congratulated the man.

"Well, you definitely proved me wrong, Vaike. Good job," I said as I clapped for his victory.

Other Shepherds that had watched the spectacle of Vaike downing the soup were amazed. They were so amazed that they actually picked up their spoons to give it a try.

What… did I just cause?

While others at the table took their first bites of the meal, Vaike was still grinning. He hadn't changed his expression at all nor did he ever respond to my congratulating. He sat as if he had been frozen in time. The man wasn't even blinking! Suddenly, his eyes started to uncontrollably water as the other people at the table had the same effect happening to them.

Vaike then stood up in a burst of energy as he exclaimed, "Water!"

The other foolish Shepherds that also ate some of the strange soup also sprang up from their chairs shouting the same thing. After they ran from the room trying to find the closest source of water, only Sully, Miriel, and I remained.

Sully sighed inwardly as she said, "And I almost thought I made something good."

Miriel responded to Sully's depression with, "There's always next time. Just try not to use too much capsicum in the next endeavor."

"Capi… What?" Sully asked in confusion.

"Chili peppers. You used far too much of them," Miriel stated as she exited the room herself.

"Well," Sully said as she stood up from her chair, "I'm done with this whole cooking business anyways. Just thought I'd give it another try."

She then started to pick up the remaining dishes as she looked to me and asked, "Gonna just sit there and watch a lady do all the work?"

"No, not at all!" I said as I went to assist her with the cleaning of the table.

Sully and I cleaned the dishes for the night as the other members drank from a nearby well they had nearby their HQ. None of them were exactly pleased with the ordeal quite like Vaike was. He came to me after I had finished dish duty with Sully gloating about how he beat me. I wasn't quite sure I had actually got any payback on him at all.

Despite this, the Shepherds all retired to their beds as I did as well. They had given me a room on the second floor of their HQ which was apparently where everyone's rooms were. They weren't all that large, but it's the thought that counts. The beds actually weren't all that bad. Not that it takes much for me to fall asleep anyways.

Although I did have a good idea on what would happen if I did fall asleep. I'd wake back up in my bed in the real world and I'd be faced with another little movie on my 3ds. With how things are going, I'm definitely going to need to figure out what exactly is going on.

Why is this happening? How is it happening? Is it only happening to me? Have I simply just gone bonkers? These are the questions I wanted answered as soon as possible before I find myself unable to get out of this rabbit's hole. At least, I hope there's a way out.

There's the end of the chapter if you couldn't tell.

So I'd like to apologize for some of the beginning dialogue first off. As some may notice I did stick fairly close to some of it and Frederick's explanation of the exalt is a clear rip. I simply couldn't think of a lot of stuff for that scene in particular. Hopefully, this doesn't upset you guys too much. I'll try and fix it if it does.

Onto the training, as some may notice; sword fighting isn't exactly common knowledge to me. I don't have much knowledge on the subject but I am researching it as of the previous chapter. I'm not trying to make this fic have really realistic and detailed sword fighting but I'd like to maybe slowly upgrade to that if possible. Or maybe just improve in general. An example of my learnings through my research; you actually aren't supposed to just sit around and block! Something that Vincent has also just learned! Apparently, you are supposed to be constantly moving and be aggressive. I'll try to improve in this department as things move along. No promises though. I may just fail ultimately.

As I said I would, I'm going to be responding to some reviews now. I'm not responding to them all, but ones that I feel like I should respond to. Thanks for your reviews!

o realisticFantasy o: I don't mind your musing at all. In fact, I quite enjoy it because it's beneficial to me. Like your thoughts on Vincent training in the real world. I'll admit I hadn't thought of this mostly because of how I'm thinking of the future of this fic. It's still a good thought and I might have to take this idea into account for future chapters! Thanks!

WordBirdNerd: Funnily enough, I finished this chapter once you left your reviews so that's some perfect timing. I'm going to do these in parts so you, and I suppose others, can see what I'm responding to.

Chapter 1 response: For my honest answer to the honest question: I do not. The opening ended up mentioning cheesy self inserts because I had actually written multiple openings to that first chapter. One of which was in fact Vince starting to play Fire Emblem before he found himself in the game. I scrapped the idea for being too cheesy and because I had kind of done the same thing in my other fic. The thought of it still, however, leaked into my writing and I decided to leave it in. I'll admit it was pretty weird but it's merely the way I operate I suppose as you've probably already noticed. As for the no weapon situation with Auden, I had actually forgotten about this entirely until I found myself already writing the fight to whihc I merely went with it. Maybe I'll go back and add that in at some point. Finally for the fight with Auden and bandits, as I pointed out above; sword fighting isn't my forte. Hopefully, I can improve on this.

Chapter 2 response: Glad to know I'm not the only one that understands bears aren't crazy. To my knowledge, I believe polar bears are the only ones to be aggressive and even they have reason to be which is mostly out of hunger. The real world/game world can be a bit tedious I'll admit and I'm glad I managed to get through with having it show that Vince is feeling freaked out by it. I like to say it's a bit rewarding to read that. As for his reaction in the end to it, since it is essentially a SI I'll say that this would be my honest to God reaction. I wouldn't go trying to show it to somebody mostly because if it didn't show what I saw I'd look insane and feel more insane. I will say, however, that testing will surely happen in the coming chapters as could be derived from the end of this one. Plus, I must've written it to blandly but the game did in fact go back to being normal after showing the dream in the form of a game. Maybe I need to go back and add more detail to that to make it understandable. As for the mercenary thing, I did mean definitely and it was in regards to Auden.

Chapter 3 response: I didn't know that seeing on how I've never awoken to being carried. Thanks for the info though. For the fatal injuries, I will say that when Auden is attacking them these would be normal attacks that would obviously get a reaction from a normal person. Something that could probably even end a fight with a regular person. Perhaps I'll go back and clarify this. Also, a chop into the neck to one of the Risen was dealt by Vince. The Risen merely shrugged this attack off, however, and went back to fighting. I feel as though this reaffirms his reasoning for killing blows like ones to vital organs. As for Sully's armor, yes I did want to go for a different look. Simply put it, I dislike the crap out of both her and Stahl's armor. Their armor schemes are so similar and yet the only real difference between the two is their colors. Oh, she's the red knight while he's the green. It almost makes them feel generic. It's honestly lame in my opinion when you have that and then you have Frederick wearing some pretty killer armor. Even Kellam's is pretty good looking even though it only has orange streaks going through it. If I can come up with a better description for their armor. I'll go back and add it in. Until then, they're merely following Kellam's style of coloring with their old style of armor.

Thanks for those reviews, WordBirdNerd! They may have been lengthy responses and I apologize for my big mouth but I liked responding to your reviews anyways! They're definitely helpful and I hope you leave some more.

This goes for everyone too. I'd like to see those reviews if you have any. Leave one and I'll definitely be grateful!

Chapter 5: Speculations

So besides being the most difficult chapter I've ever written, I can happily say that it is at least finally done.

Also, I know some don't see weeks the same so I'm going to say here that I consider Sunday as the first day of the week. Some see Monday as the first of the week, but I go with Sunday. Just getting that out there because this makes this chapter my at least one chapter for the week.

Anyways, going onto that Chapter now.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Speculations

My eyes cracked opened slowly as I lay sprawled out across my bed. The familiar scenery entered my mind once again. Couch covered with random things in the corner, desk with a computer and the devil console on it in front of the window, an entertainment center opposite to that, and of course the messy floor that had all kinds of objects thrown about on top of it.

For the second time I have gone back to the regular world after spending almost more than an entire day in Fire Emblem's. Things were working exactly as I had thought they might. This wasn't some kind of strangely pieced together happening. It seemed more likely that it was a system. It was a system that followed a set of rules. Rules that were placing me into a game world when I slept and taking me back out when I slept in that world.

If that was really how it was working, then I could almost calm myself about thinking of my loss of sanity. I was almost certain that this wasn't all an illusion or some kind of hallucination now. Or at least, not one I could've created. My brain couldn't come up with such elaborately stringed together events. Events that consisted of me falling asleep, waking up in a game's world, falling back asleep, waking back up in the real world, and, to top it all off, my 3ds playing the events in the game world that I had just experienced.

Speaking of my 3ds, I sat up in my bed and eyed the devil that precariously laid itself on my desk. The thing shot fear into me just from looking at it because it was my reminder that what was going on will continue to do so. It was a reminder for me that what I had just experienced was real, and that I would be going back into its world.

While I was reluctant to do so, I willed myself to go to the handheld console and watch what it wanted me to. I was reluctant because of the thoughts that were going through my head. Like my thought of how this all worked.

What if it won't happen again if I don't watch what's inside my 3ds? What if it would all stop if I just got rid of it? It has some sort of linkage to this so it must control something, right?

Despite these thoughts, however, I went towards the 3ds anyways. If this is as large scaled as being able to send me into a game world, I'm certain that throwing away, or even avoiding, this 3ds won't help. It would more than likely find a way to show me what it wants and would only make things more difficult.

I picked up the device and turned it on without hesitation. My hands were shaking slightly as the console booted up the game inside it.

What if it doesn't do anything weird? M-Maybe it's all done? Maybe I can sleep without worrying about waking up in another world.

Although I wished and wished for the 3ds to be normal, it did not heed any of these wishes. Once again, it started up its little movie of my experiences in the game world. The game focused on me this time, however. Rather than starting itself on the Shepherd in the woods like it should've, it started with Auden sitting next to a fire that he had started while I slept nearby. The firestorm started up and Auden started to carry me through it in an attempt to keep me safe. When I awoke, the gates the Risen fall out of showed up.

The fact that the game somehow has my voice in it still creeps me out.

The events that transpired afterward were exactly the same as I remembered them. Marth saved Auden and I, we regrouped with the rest of the Shepherds, and we finally made it to Ylisstol. While the game did avoid more of the detailed parts of my experiences in the game world like the training I had with Vaike, it still followed the core parts of

them.

Strangely enough, once the game seemed to be done with its movie for me it went back to the world map and I could do a few things. This was oddly different because the last time I couldn't perform a single task as the console saved the game itself and quickly restarted to go back to normal. This time, however, the game was allowing me to wander the small bit of world map that was unlocked. I could head between, Southtown, the Chapter 1 forest, and Chapter 2's location. I couldn't, however, start Chapter 2 despite me attempting this for a solid five minutes. I actually couldn't enter any location no matter how hard I tried to will it. The only things I could do were wandering around the world map and opening the menu.

The menu was extremely odd. It was odd because I could open up anything I wanted to ie: Inventroy, Barracks, etc. Most of these options shouldn't have even been present though! You could only really do supports after Chapter 1! Not that it made much difference here. They all seemed utterly useless.

I went into inventory expecting to maybe see the insides of character's pockets but all I got was bupkis! A whole lot of question marks riddled the screen as I couldn't look at what each character was holding nor could I even see their stats! Not even Supports held anything in them. Each character was devoid of others they could support. Each option provided nothing of interest to me. Not even my own character had anything in these screens. Was it the devil console's way of telling me I'm not a tactician? Or maybe it's trying to tell me that the game world I'm experiencing is more than just lines of code now.

Either way, after I fiddled around with the options of absolute uselessness, the game abruptly saved once again and restarted itself. When I was brought back to the menu of Fire Emblem: Awakening, everything was back to normal. If I so desired, I could play through one of my saves or even a new one. Nothing was odd about these files. Everything was as the game should be. No matter what I tried though the game wasn't going to fritz out on me and start playing what had just happened in the game world.

Seeing it was past its strange antics, I sat it back down on my desk and leaned back in my chair. I swiveled back and forth in my chair out of slight annoyance. I was annoyed because of the fact that I didn't have the slightest clue on how or even why any of this was happening, nor did I know how to stop it.

Could it be that my 3ds is the cause of all this? It's the one trying to remind me of what I'm going through so how far off is the idea really?

It sounds weird, but it could be a possibility. Maybe my 3ds was pulling me into the world of the game inside it during my sleep. To be safe I would just keep all game cartridges out of the 3ds to avoid going into any game at all, but there's the chance that's not how it works. It could end up putting me into the world of the game that was last inside it, or worse; it puts me into an empty void of nothing. In that case, while I try to figure things out, I could always put a much safer game inside it.

Considering my options, I put my money on Pokemon Y being the safest. It's a game for kids about interacting with a world full of fantasy monsters. It wouldn't be nearly as dangerous as a game filled with war like Fire Emblem. If I couldn't find myself able to survive in that, I would be in real trouble with anything else.

I decided on it, and took Fire Emblem: Awakening out of my 3ds while I replaced it with Pokemon Y.

That would be a much nicer world to end up in than the one I got an axe cut into me.

Feeling a bit safer with the thought of being put in a Pokemon game rather than a Fire emblem one, I felt the need to think about how other things worked. Like how I'm really entering into these game worlds.

I understand that when I fall asleep I wake up in the game world, but is that really how it's working? Maybe it's on a timer, or it could be happening at a certain time of the day. I haven't been paying attention to when all of this has been happening so this might be a good start. I woke up at about ten in the morning today so I'll keep that in mind.

To test this out I should try and stay awake tonight. I'll go without sleep for now to see if it is directly linked with my sleeping. Sleep deprivation is worth it if I can learn a few things about these happenings.

Granted I shouldn't be trying to get used to this, but I feel as though that I should use my time in the real world wisely. I don't think I should use it as a relaxation point, but instead as a chance to improve my chances in living in whatever game world I end up in. I could learn a few things here that I couldn't in the game world.

I do have the internet here and everyone knows the internet knows everything. Alright that was obviously a lie considering I just searched how this is all happening just for the fun of it and all I got was that I'm addicted to video games.

Stupid Google…

Ok, maybe I can do some research on things that might benefit me in the long run. Like maybe I should look up some things that would assist me in a video game world.

I considered what I should research and went for sword fighting. Granted that there is a chance I end up in a Pokemon world knowing how to hold a sword, there is always the chance I go back to Fire Emblen: Awakening's world with this same knowledge. Knowing how to fight with a sword will be either useless or beneficial. I'd like to go with the chance of it being beneficial.

So I went ahead with researching sword fighting. What I found was fairly enlightening and might cause me to never be able to look at another sword fight in movies, or even games, the same again. There was a large amount of sword fighting that I had no prior knowledge to before now.

The first thing that surprised me was just how dirty sword fights were. Punches, stomps, grapples, and all kinds of other dirty tricks that fighters could use were all heavily present in sword fights. If it allowed them to kill their opponent, they were going to use it.

Surprisingly, Vaike was actually teaching me this. I had thought he might've just been showing me how cut throat bandits could be, but I suppose these things could generally apply to most individuals. At the very least, it applies to people that want to live in a battle. This could further be applied to people that don't generally care for honor in battles like somebody such as Chrom would try to uphold. Well, I can say that I at least am in the group of people that want to survive. If that means dirty tactics might have to be used, I will do so to live to see another day.

Another thing I've learned is a few stances. Although I didn't actually have any knowledge on this subject before so it should be assumed that I would learn something in this subject. Onto the stances, I've learned that it is important to generally spread your feet apart a good distance. About shoulder length distance is the most used distance. Most stances generally have this foot spread with your strong foot leading. This supposedly helps as when you step forward with your weak leg to swing your sword, you twist your body in the direction of your swing thus adding more force into your swing.

I've also found out about something called half sword. It's something that involves a person holding onto the central part of their sword's blade with one of their hands while they continue to hold their guard with their other hand. It provides more control, more leverage, and more powerful thrusts to a person's sword apparently. It does, however, come with its con of shortening your range though. Still, there comes a time when this is completely necessary supposedly. If you're having trouble penetrating a highly armored opponent, trying to half sword could provide enough power in your thrust to pierce into them.

Man, people are nuts! Some of these guys try to swing their swords like hammers! They use their blades to swing with as they bash their opponents in the face with their guards! They're all crazy!

I've also learned that it's key to not blocking anything with your sword's edge. It's key to not bash your sword's edge into things recklessly as the sword is obviously not invincible. Constant bashing of the sword's edge will leave it dull and less useful than a heavy butter knife. Blocks should never be done with the edge to avoid this.

Ugh… All this research… It's already dark… W-Whoa! Is it really three in the morning?! Jeez… Why'd nobody pull me from this? Wait. I wasn't pulled. I'm still in the real world!

I was still in deed living in the real world instead of Fire Emblem's. I know for a fact that I had fallen asleep much earlier than midnight in the last two occurrences so that meant at least one thing; it had to be linked to my sleep. It wasn't a matter of when it happened. All that mattered was that I fell asleep. This would mean that so long as I stayed awake, I would remain in the real world and never go back to the game's world. Although this isn't that good of a thing to find out. Sleep is kind of a necessity for me being able to continue living healthy.

Still, if it wasn't a case of when it would happen that left, why, how, and where. Why and how would be fairly difficult considering the complexity of the situation. How is equally, if not even harder, to understand. Where, however, was a good start to something. By this I mean where these events are happening. So far, they've all transpired in my room and more importantly in my bed. There was the chance that my bed was the devil bed and that it was working in close relations to the devil handheld console that was my 3ds. Ok, that may be stretching it, but isn't there still a chance that my bed somehow got turned into some kind of interdimensional sleep traveling device? Maybe. Just maybe. Or maybe I've gone insane in my attempts of actual research.

Because of my paranoia of my own bed and my desire to somewhat give it a test, I decided to sleep on the living room couch downstairs. Quite frankly, the couch was actually more comfortable than my bed. I had to wonder why I didn't just

sleep on the couch all the time. Probably because it's not normal I'd imagine.

The comforts of the couch relaxed me as I prepped myself for what could come next. My drained mind then quickly drifted off into slumber.

/WWWW\

I awoke groggily to an eerily silent room, but I paid the silence no mind. What I did pay attention to was the fact that this silent room happened to not be my living room. It was my room I had just been given by the Shepherds. My day was starting in Fire Emblem: Awakening once again.

I should really stop being surprised by this considering how often it'll probably be happening in the future. That is, if I don't find a way to stop it in the near future.

Also, I should really be thinking a bit more about what I should be doing in this world. Since I finally have a chance to sit and think about that, I had might as well do so now.

I got up from my bed in a slow motion and perform a satisfying stretch before fully getting off my bed.

Should I try to change the plot? Besides being the most dangerous thing to consider doing, I doubt I could actually perform some of those changes. Like rescuing Emmeryn. I doubt that I could do a thing in that situation. Not to mention I'm not entirely sure it would be worth the trouble. I mean, she apparently shows up again without her memory. Granted losing her memory is a pretty big deal and I would be preventing that in saving her, but I could throw the whole world in another direction if I were to do that. It's an insane risk.

After getting off my bed, I grabbed my sword off the ground and strapped it to my side again. With my sword secured to my side, I exited out of my room and into the silent hallway. I then started to make my way for the stairs to head downstairs.

Maybe I could just lay low. Hide it out until the game's plot is over. Who knows? It may be my ticket out of here if the game is beaten. I mean, is it even possible for this world to carry on without any plot? Granted my own world doesn't have a plot so a game's could very well continue just the same.

I made it to the stairs and slowly walked down them while I was still in deep thought. The bottom floor turned out to be just as quiet as the second. There appeared to only be Miriel by what I could see and she seemed to be saying something to me.

"So you are awake. I was just about to rouse you from your slumber like Vaike should have done," Miriel stated while pushing her glasses up.

I, however, was paying little to no attention at all to her conversation so I only caught bits and pieces of it. I was more prioritized in what I was thinking about to listen to her, but I still tried to respond.

"Huh? Oh… Morning, Miriel," I said as I finished walking down the steps and onto the first floor.

If I do end up sticking around with the Shepherds, I should seriously think about getting some kind of armor. These clothes are hardly going to keep my body in one piece!

"Morning to you as well. Well, since you're already awake I'll communicate the message to you now. The rest of the Shepherds have already instigated the march for Regna Ferox. We, however, are trailing behind," Miriel said as she walked towards the front door.

Again, I hardly paid any mind to anything she was saying.

I should go out and buy some armor. Like some kind of shoulder armor! Yeah, that would be great for avoiding axes!

"Hm? The march? Oh, yeah, yeah. I already know about that," I said in a dismissing manner.

"You do? Well, that makes this less complicated. Can I trust you to notify Stahl? He doesn't know either and I'd like to catch up to the assemblage as fast as possible," Miriel said as she opened the door and stepped outside it.

"Stahl? Yeah, yeah. I'll tell Stahl about… that," I said while I continued to be lost in deep thought.

"Excelent. I'll head out now. If I reach them before you two, I'll have them wait," Miriel said before fully exiting out the front door and closing it behind her.

Yeah, yeah. Head out already. Where was I? Oh, yeah. Gear. I should go out and buy some gear. Wait. Better yet, I should see if this place has any free gear. Free stuff is always better than stuff that costs actual money.

I started my search to find some kind of gear in the Shepherd's HQ. Without much to go by for a base point of my search, I simply wandered into rooms that I felt could hold what I was looking for.

Funnily enough, I did find something of interest. Well, at least it looked interesting before I really looked at it. It was a book with some kind of strange writing on it. There were some other books with the same kind of writing on it except in different colors. There was yellow, red, and even a green one. They looked interesting at first, but when I came to realize that I couldn't read a thing that was written in them I quickly realized how useless they were to me.

Stupid other worlds with their weird writing. How come they speak English but their writing is Greek to me!? Well, I should be thankful they don't speak Japanese like I'm pretty sure they should be considering it was the original language for the game. Wait, wait. What the hell am I going on about what language these characters should be speaking?! I'm looking for gear! Fuck books!

After realizing just how much time I had just wasted trying to hopelessly read some alien books, I returned to my original endeavors in finding some useful gear. Seemingly, this was pointless as most of what appeared to be the Shepherd's armory looked to be recently scavenged. Not even a simple shield was left in its confines. I was lucky to find a few swords. But even they weren't going to provide any use to me.

What does a guy have to do to find something useful around here?!

"You looking for something, Vincent?" Stahl asked from behind me causing me to slightly jump from the sudden intrusion.

"H-Huh? Oh, Stahl… Yeah, I was looking around for some gear. Was kind of hoping to find something around here," I said as I returned my gaze to the empty armory.

"Hm…" Stahl said as he observed the empty armory while eating what looked like a muffin in his hand, "Yeah, weird… Looks like we've run out of spare gear again."

"Is this a common occurrence?" I asked as he continued to look around the armory.

"No, usually Frederick keeps us well stocked. It's pretty unlike him to let us run out like this," Stahl said as he ended his observations of the armory.

"So then what do I do if I want some gear?!" I asked in a panic.

Stahl laughed silently at my panic as he calmly said after taking another bite of his food, "Well, you could always head down to Rowan's shop. He gives us Shepherds a pretty good deal. It's right on the edge of the capitol near the eastern gate."

I sighed inwardly in relief to know that there was at least somewhere for me to grab some kind of gear.

"That would be good. I'll go there then," I said before exiting the armor room with Stahl in tow.

We went our separate ways in the building when Stahl was interested in going to the kitchen to catch breakfast. Supposedly, Maribelle was baking all kinds of different goodies and that was where he had grabbed the muffin he had.

I would have to give Maribelle's baking a try when I returned if she would allow me to.

Surprisingly, it actually didn't take long to find Rowen's shop. It was indeed near the eastern gate of Ylisstol. It also helped that there was a large sign with his name on it directing people's attention to his shop.

Without a second thought, I went inside to explore the different things that I could purchase. I had chosen everything that I would want to buy when it all hit me. I had zero money to pay for anything. Not a single gold piece to my name. This resulted in my… groveling… to the store owner.

"L-Look, isn't there some way that I could get that stuff?" I asked while I clasped my hands together in front of me before bowing my head.

"Can't say I know of it if there is one, kid," Rowen said as he crossed his arms.

There it is again…

"You could work here for a few days if you're really hurting for some gold. I'd say… maybe three days of work 'round here would cover it," he said as he wiped his finger across his wooden counter to inspect the level of dust on it.

"But I can't do that! I really don't have the time for that! Can't you give me some kind of discount for being a Shepherd?!" I asked him desperately.

The word Shepherd seemed to hit a light in the man as his face lit up.

"Oh! You're a Shepherd, eh? Come to think about it, I do believe I saw you with Sully the other day. You a new recruit, kid?" he asked me with a grin now after uncrossing his arms.

Finally, something that'll go MY way for once.

His sudden happiness of hearing about me being a Shepherd calmed me down as well as I was able to regain my composure. I stated calmly, "Yeah, I just joined yesterday. I was told that you were the shop to go to if I needed some gear."

This struck more buttons in the man as he was almost glowing brighter than a Christmas tree. Rowen said joyfully, "They pointed you in the right direction, my friend! For a Shepherd I can do… half price!"

Half price?!

"You're still going to charge me?!" I asked as I fell out of my calm state I was easing into.

"Well, of course I am. I hope you understand. I'm running a business here. I can't go giving out supplies. It's bad for my pockets!" he said as his grin vanished.

This guy and Anna would probably see pretty close to eye to eye.

Seeing that I've exhausted all my options and that my hopes were completely blown out, I turned around to exit the store with my head hung low. Rowen might've shouted something as I was leaving, but I paid it no mind as it probably wasn't going to add any gold to my empty pockets.

Oh how poor I am. Poor me. Not a single gold piece even to chew on. I'll probably never know the feeling of this world's currency. Not even the smell- Hello? This guy is shoving a pouch in my face. Oh. He's talking. Should probably pay attention to that.

"You're in need of some financial help, right? Well?" the man in a cloak in front of me continued to ask as he held a pouch of what sounded like gold in front of me.

Oh how poor I am. Poor me. Not a single gold piece even to chew on. I'll probably never know the feeling of this world's currency. Not even the smell- Hello? This guy is shoving a pouch in my face. Oh. He's talking. Should probably pay attention to that.

"You're in need of some financial help, right? Well?" the man in a cloak in front of me continued to ask as he held a pouch of what sounded like gold in front of me.

"U-Um… Yeah, I am, but you're not… giving this to me, are you?" I asked feeling skeptical of the situation.

"You're a Shepherd, right? I heard you in there. The Shepherds helped save me once upon a time and I'd like to repay my debt by helping you!" he said as he forced the pouch into my hands.

Not fully understanding the situation, I took the pouch only because of how quick things were happening.

"Thanks? Yeah, um… thanks. Do you have a name?" I asked.

"Oh, we can talk later. Just go and have fun with that for now," he said as he spun me around to face Rowen's shop that I had just recently walked out of.

He pushed me forward and into the shop subsequently. I didn't really know what to do about the situation. Some random man just gave me money to help me. I should be really happy, but I oddly don't. I feel… neutral?... about this whole thing. I'm ecstatic, but I'm feeling suspicious.

Ok, paranoia, shut up. The guy could really have been just a helpful person. Why does his generosity have to be suspicious? Just enjoy the fact that you have some money now.

I went ahead and purchased some of the discounted gear that Rowen had set aside for me. Surprisingly, I was given enough to buy two thirds of what I wanted. About a few hundred gold pieces to purchase a few pieces of gear.

What I bought included a pair of leather gauntlets, and a single brigantine pauldron. Not a long list, right? Well, that's because I'm fucking broke and couldn't afford the vest! I couldn't even buy a shield damnit!

I hate this stupid economy!

Either way, I was pleased to get something. Gauntlets would help in upcoming sword fights so that I don't go cutting my hands every two seconds and the shoulder gear would protect one of my shoulders. More specifically, it would protect my left shoulder since I'm right handed and would be better at protecting my right side rather than my left.

First thing I was eager to put on was the pauldron.

Fuck you axes!

It was only studded leather essentially, but that was still better than simple cloth. I strapped on the gray pauldron with joy as I felt slightly safer with the cover it provided to my left shoulder. The next thing I put on was the gray gauntlets. They were made out of leather so they were fairly easy to wear and they covered my hands and my forearm up to my elbow.

I exited Rowen's shop again, this time with my newly purchased gear. Also, I didn't exit feeling defeated, Actually, I felt extremely pleased with how well things seemed to have worked out. Before I could take another step away from Rowen's shop, however, I was stopped once again by the same cloaked man that handed me money in the first place.

I wanted to get a look at what the guy looked like, but his cloak's hood shrouded his face too well from my eyes.

"I see you've already spent that gold! You sure aren't one for saving, are ya?" he asked sarcastically as he laughed slightly.

"Hey, thanks again. I couldn't have bought this stuff it weren't for you. Could you tell me your name now?" I asked him for the second time.

"Oh! I had almost forgot! How rude of me! The name's Thomas," the cloaked individual said as he removed his hood.

He had shaggy black hair and looked to be no older than my age.

"Well, thanks, Thomas. It's much appreciated," I said as I extended my hand to him for a handshake.

He accepted my hand and shook it in his as he said, "Ahaha. I really couldn't help myself when I heard you were a Shepherd. You guys do so much for us. It's only right that we try to help you guys."

"So you said the Shepherds saved you? I hope you don't mind me asking, but what exactly happened?" I asked as I started up in a walk expecting him to follow.

"Oh, I have no problem telling about it," Thomas said as he started to follow me in my walk, "I had gotten held up on the way to the capitol a couple of months ago by some Plegian bandits. Luckily for me, your Captain and a few other Shepherds were passing by at roughly the same time."

Thomas then had his head hang slightly forward as he said in a slightly depressed tone, "They were… um… going to capture me. Sell me as a slave, you know? If it weren't for you guys, I'd probably be locked up in some cage like an animal right now."

Ouch. There's slavery in this world? Well, it's nice to hear that at least Thomas here isn't in that portion of the world.

"Well, uh… Glad to hear that didn't happen!" I said in a way to try and lighten the mood. Also, I had no idea what to realistically say to a person that was almost caught as a slave.

"Oh, yeah! It really was the best thing to happen to me! It also helped me decide on what I really want to be in life!" Thomas said enthusiastically after he lifted his head back up.

"Oh? What would that be?" I asked.

"To be a Shepherd of course!" Thomas said with a smirk.

Wow… Why didn't I see that coming?

"How is it anyway? B-Being a Shepherd I mean," Thomas asked sheepishly.

Huh? Is being a Shepherd kind of like being a celebrity in this country? I guess it is. It's a pretty good feeling, I'd say.

"Um… It's… pretty cool so far. I wouldn't really know that much considering I only actually joined yesterday," I answered nervously while scratching my head in embarrassment.

"You're lucky… I… I could never do what you guys do," Thomas said shyly.

What?!

"B-But you just said you wanted to be a Shepherd! Being a Shepherd kind of requires doing what they do!" I said.

"Well… you see... that's kind of why I haven't tried to join yet. The fighting… I'm just not sure I could handle it," Thomas said.

Oh… I can see what he's talking about. Being a Shepherd requires having to fight. It'll probably even require killing some people on the battlefield. Honestly, even I don't know if I could handle killing another yet. It takes guts to do what the Shepherds do.

"Hey, don't sweat it," I said as I placed my hand onto Thomas' shoulder, "I'm sure you'll figure out something. And, if you want to, swing by the Shepherd's HQ today. I can probably get the same guy that's training me to help you!"

I'm sure if Vaike could help me then he could more than definitely help out Thomas here!

"Huh? There's more of you still at your guy's HQ?" Thomas asked with a confused look.

"Uh… Yeah… Why wouldn't there be?" I asked feeling confused as well.

"Well, I just saw your Captain and a whole lot of the other Shepherds heading out the West gate earlier today. I was just under the assumption that maybe you were the only one that was left there," Thomas answered.

They left? Where the hell would they be going? Wait. Wasn't I told about this? Shit. Come on brain! Work with me here! Oh! I remember now! Wait… This is terrible! Absolutely terrible!

"Shit!" I shouted in sudden realization, "We got left behind!"

My sudden change in demeanor stunned Thomas slightly. Before I went rushing back to the Shepherd's HQ, I told Thomas, "Hey, thanks for the reminder, but I've gotta go now! I've got to catch up to them! If you'd like, you can go hang out at our HQ! Just tell whoever's there that I sent you!"

My body then broke into a full sprint as I rushed back to the Shepherd's HQ. I ignored any kind of obstacle in my way as I rushed to get Stahl as fast as I could.

How could I forget about this crap!? Damnit! Miriel! She was even trying to tell me about this I bet! Shit. If she already left, then Stahl and I will be extremely late!

I busted through the front door to the Shepherd's HQ and looked around my immediate surrounding for any signs of Stahl. Luckily, I find him relaxing on one of the various crates with a slice of cake on a plate in his hands. He was thoroughly enjoying the pastry in front of him until I busted in to the room.

"Stahl, stop eating!" I shouted as I stood panting from my run.

He dropped the plate and the slice of cake on it to the ground without a second delay. He did, however, continue to chew whatever amount of food he had left in his mouth before he asked, "What's going on?"

"We've been left behind, Stahl!" I said.

"What?! W-What do you mean?!" Stahl asked as he lost his mellow attitude.

"Chrom… the others… they're all heading to Regna Ferox without us!" I said as I tried to catch my breath.

"They left?! How come I wasn't told about this march?!" Stahl asked as he got up from the crate he was sitting on.

Well… it was my fault kind of… but it's mostly Vaike's! That doesn't matter right now though!

"That doesn't matter! What does matter is they're probably almost hallway there by now! We gotta get going!" I said as I tried to get Stahl moving.

"H-Hang on! The stables!" Stahl said as he seemed to have some kind of idea.

I followed him out back and into the stables in a hurry. Both of us were going about ninety miles an hour as we ran into the stables slightly spooking the horses in them.

Stahl grabbed two horses that were saddled up and handed me one of their reins.

"Do you know how to ride a horse?" he asked while he was handing me the reins.

He expects me to ride a horse!?

"I-I've only rode one once and that was hardly even anything!" I answered him while taking the reins from him.

Seriously, it was at my grandpa's house and it wasn't even at a trot I'd say! Plus, that was years ago!

"Well, there's no time like the present to learn," Stahl said with a smirk as he got up on his horse.

Right… No time like the present… Nice horsy… Good horsy… Please let me get on you horsy…

I placed my left foot into the stirrup on the saddle and held the reins tightly in my left hand. I then placed my right hand onto the saddle as I got ready to hop myself up and onto it. When I felt that I was ready, I hopped myself up and onto the saddle as I swung my other leg over to the other side of the horse.

Ok, not too bad. Crap! Sit up straight! Don't slouch!

I caught myself from losing my balance on the horse's saddle as I remembered to sit up straight on it.

"Ok, at least you're on it. That's half the battle right there!" Stahl said with an amused look.

"Yeah? Well, this is more than half of what I even know!" I answered back.

"You know how to get him going? Just squeeze your feet together on his sides. He'll know what you mean," Stahl said as he trotted his horse out of the stables and stopped outside it to wait for me.

Ok, um… Squeeze my feet… Right… How hard could… Whoa!

I did as Stahl instructed me, but I might've squeezed too hard or too fast because the horse took it as a sign to go a bit faster than a slow trot. I was caught off guard by this as I was forced to pull back on the reins. This confused the horse even more as it tried to turn around. I then remembered that I should probably stop squeezing the horse's sides to get him to stop faster.

Stahl looked at me in confusion as I was barely out the front of the stables and almost heading back in them as he said, "Yeah, this could be difficult."

"No, no! I got this! It's all… just… a little hard to get used to!" I said as I tried to get the horse to face Stahl. Somehow, I was successful in this department.

"Ok, um… Try a trot again?" Stahl said as a suggestion.

I did again try to get the horse to trot to Stahl and was actually successful in this department. I even managed to get the horse to stop near Stahl and his horse.

"Alright! This is good!" Stahl said as he smirked.

"While I'd like to really teach you how to ride the horse, we really don't have time to be doing that. So I'll go over basics!" Stahl continued to say.

"Well, there's the canter which could be what we use for a lot of this trip just to not burn out our horses. That involves using your right leg to push into your horse's side instead of both of your legs," Stahl said as he showed me an example of his horse cantering.

I tried the same thing and it wasn't as difficult as I thought it might've been. It could be that these horses are just well trained in recognizing these simple commands or that I'm just a natural. I'll go with the former. The only thing I have to

worry about is keeping my balance really.

Stahl then explained how to get the horse to gallop as well and he gave me an example of his horse galloping before he came back.

I did as I saw him do, and found the gallop to be very difficult. I had to hold myself up straight on my own with only my feet in the stirrups and my butt off the saddle. Also, I had to keep the reins length short so that the horse could lower his head into the gallop. I'll probably enjoy not having to gallop.

"Ok, that's… probably good enough," Stahl said as he scratched his head.

"Probably?!" I asked loudly in doubt.

"Well, you'll at least probably not going to fall off the horse," Stahl said with a nervous smile at my obvious concern for my own safety.

I sighed inwardly as I then said, "Ok, so are we going to go now?"

"That's the thing…. Do you even know where in Regna Ferox they were heading?" Stahl asked.

We stared at each other in silence as neither of us fully understood where they were heading. There was only the knowledge of the kingdom they were heading to and its border was massive! There could be any number of ways that might've taken to get into Regna Ferox!

"W-Wait!" I said as I remembered, "I know the path they're probably taking! Do you have a map?"

Please let them be taking the game's path… please…

Stahl pulled out a map he kept along with something for me to draw the path on it. The map actually was very close to the game's world map that you're constantly running across. It made drawing the path a thousand times easier as I had looked at it on my 3ds so many times. I handed the map back to Stahl with the path that I was certain they were taking as he studied it.

"Alright, we can follow this and we might catch up to them or…" Stahl said as he pocketed the map.

"Or?!" I asked wanting to know the rest of what he was saying.

"Or we get lost and freeze to death in the cold weather up in the north!" Stahl said with a grin as he was obviously unaffected by what he just said.

I, on the other hand, was extremely affected by his words.

Freezing to death does not sound fun!

"Can we not talk about dying and just get going?" I asked wanting to get going.

"Well, we could also get ambushed by some Plegian b-"Stahl continued to go about the ways we could die before I cut him off.

"Let's go!" I shouted not wanting to hear the rest of what he was saying.

We then quickly rode our horses onto the path that I had drawn on the map with Stahl leading. Our goal was to catch up to the others as fast as possible. There wasn't even time for us to say goodbye to Maribelle or Ricken. We had already wasted enough time lying around. If we were to catch up, we would have to focus on nothing but travel.

Hopefully we catch them before they get engaged with the Risen. It'll be even worse if they make it past Regna Ferox's border before we catch up to them! God, why couldn't I have been off catching Pokemon instead of this?

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Meanwhile, on the outskirts of Ylisstol was a sizeable group of Plegian bandits. They had set up a small camp far out of sight of the city to avoid detection. They were even at the ends of the forest to the west of the city to provide better cover.

The population of the bandit camp went about rudimentary tasks that would keep them well prepared for an engagement. Some were sharpening blades, others were training on small practice dummies and there was even a few that were taking the time to get in a good workout.

They were all keeping themselves well busy as they seemed to not want to be caught slacking by their leader. Their leader actually seemed to look fairly weaker than the smallest of the bandits. He wore a red cloak that covered his entire body in it. He kept his face hidden underneath the hood as he wandered around his camp scolding anybody that might've been slacking.

Suddenly a person came rushing to the camp and stopped once he reached the camp's leader's side. The individual in question wore a cloak as well, but his seemed more torn than the leader's. He pulled off his cloak's hood to reveal that he had pale skin and shaggy black hair.

"I'm… back…" the man with shaggy black hair said in between breaths.

The bandit leader turned to the man and said in a calm tone, "Oh? You're back you say? I hadn't noticed, Thomas."

The man named Thomas held up his hands in defense as he said, "I-I d-didn't mean to offend! I was merely… u-uh…"

"Stating the obvious as usual," the leader said exhausted.

"U-Um… Yeah! My apologies, but I have useful information!" Thomas said as he tried to calm himself.

"Useful? Last time you had "useful" information you merely told me that the Shepherds were heading "somewhere". I do hope this is more useful than that. Remember what I told you, Thomas," the leader stated as he slowly drew a dagger out of his cloak to hold in front of himself.

This caused Thomas to slightly shake in fear as he tried to say, "I-It is useful though! I-I know how we can find the other ones!"

"Oh, really?" the leader inquired.

"Yeah, there's going to be more Shepherds heading out!" Thomas stated proudly.

"That's your information?" the leader questioned Thomas as he took a step closer to the young man.

By now, the entire camp was watching the scene that was unfolding. They were certain of what Thomas' fate would be, but they didn't dare to interfere. If they did, they would gain the same fate as their friend.

"Y-Yes. That's what I got… I-It's good enough… right?" Thomas asked as he took a step away from the bandit leader.

"You're telling me that they're simply heading out. Something that is almost in dead similarity to your last bit of "useful" information. Do you think this is actually useful information?" the leader inquired as he placed his dagger's blade against Thomas' neck.

"W-Well, I mean it's a starting point!" Thomas said worriedly.

"Answer my question, Thomas. Is it useful?" he asked as he pressed the blade harder against Thomas' neck causing it to cut into his neck slightly.

"N-N-No…" Thomas said as he tried to ignore the pain coming from his now bleeding neck.

"And what did I tell you Thomas? If you wasted my time one more time, I was going to cut your tongue out so that you could never do it again…" the leader said intimidatingly.

"B-But I-" Thomas started to say before his leader pushed him back.

Thomas was stunned to see that his leader didn't go through with what he told him he would do. He was being spared.

"I would gladly rip your tongue out here and now, but if they are indeed heading out; then we could perhaps track them. Do you know which direction they'll be going?," the leader said in a friendly tone.

"U-Uh… Yeah! I told one of them that their leader went out the west gate! They should go out that way!" Thomas answered almost enthusiastically.

"Well, then they should be going right past us. Keep your eyes peeled. If you spot them, I promise not to chop off your tongue," the leader stated.

Thomas was then put on watch for the two Shepherds. He hoped and prayed that they would be going by them or he would be in boiling water with his leader. Seconds seemed like minutes, and minutes seemed like hours to Thomas.

He could feel the burning eyes of his leader on him as he kept watch.

In only a few minutes, the sounds of two individuals riding on horses echoed through the woods. When the bandits looked in the direction of the source, they saw the two individuals rushing through the forest they had set up camp in. They were quickly making a turn to start heading northeast.

"There! Those are both Shepherds! I'm sure of it!" Thomas said as he pointed towards the two horse riders.

"Very good, Thomas," the leader said as he wrapped his arm around Thomas to pull him closer to him, "and you avoided losing your tongue. Congrats"

"T-Thank y-" Thomas started to say before he was cut off.

He was cut off by his leader stabbing a knife directly into his gut. The resulting pain caused Thomas to drop to his knees clutching the knife in his stomach.

"B-But I thought…" Thomas said.

"What? Your tongue is perfectly fine. I never promised to not punish you, however. Now, why don't you hurry up and die?" the leader stated coldly.

In a blink of the eye, the bandit leader stabbed his dagger straight into Thomas' chest. The resulting blow killed the young man instantly as he slumped to the side. The leader then turned away from the boy as he muttered, "Useless."

"Let this be a message to you all that I'm not afraid to pick out those that are holding our little group back," the bandit leader said as he pointed his dagger at his assemblage.

"Well? Get to work! We aren't going to track anything if we don't have anybody tracking!" the leader shouted to his group which caused them all to jump to work in tracking the two Shepherd's horses that just passed them by.

"A little blood from the royals, eh? Tch. This'll be too easy," the bandit leader thought of his job in amusement.

Again, this was insanely hard for me to write. I must've rewritten this thing about four times or so. One of my previous versions of this was insanely different and was practically ready to be uploaded. Still, things went pretty smoothly and I believe this one is far better than it's past selves.

So... if anybody wants to shoot me a name for that bandit leader, you're more than welcome to. I know it must be pretty weird that I named a dude that just got killed off and not the leader, but a name wasn't sticking out to me for him so I left him nameless. Obviously we;ll be seeing the leader again so a name would help.

Not really any character interactions considering most of them are already gone so there's that. Also, no real battle as of yet. I will say that if the next chapter actually goes as planned that there will be a rather large one.

I don't really know what else to put here because I'm too drained to actually think. Whatever. Sleep.

Update: Changed up the scene with Vincent and the man that handed him money aka Thomas. I updated this scene thanks to Guardian54 pointing out how obvious Thomas being a spy was. This wasn't my intention so I tried to fix this. Hopefully this updated scene is better than the original, or at least I hope that it's a step in the right direction. If you think that it's any better or maybe worse, please let me know. I'll probably get it right one day.

Don't forget to leave a review. Also, If you have any questions, or maybe ideas, don't be afraid to send them in a PM.

Chapter 6: Battle on the Bridge!

So before anything let me thank those that had been waiting patiently for this chapter. I feel atrocious for making any of you wait agonizingly long for it. It might be rough around the edges or even out of the same groove as the previous five. I'm not terribly sure. I wouldn't be able to tell anyways so you'll have to tell me.

If you care about why I took so long to update, I try to explain a little bit about why after the chapter.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything I else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Battle on the Bridge!

With our goal to catch up to the rest of the Shepherds clear in our heads, Stahl and I rode at whatever max speed our horses could handle at any given time.

For what seemed like an hour not a single drop of idle chit-chat passed between me and him. If it wasn't related to what direction we should be heading, it was left in our thoughts.

The only sound that remained a constant was the sound of hooves stomping against the ground as we rode along. That and the sound of fallen leaves being blown past as we rode dangerously fast through a forest with what seemed to be only one path leading straight through it.

Stahl remained in the front no matter the speeds that our horses rode at. He had a very obvious bond with the horse that he rode. One that helped him to convey quick turns to his steed. I, on the other hand, had difficulty with my own mount. Coupled with my lack of experience on such animals, it made trying to get the large animal to cooperate a difficult task at times. Not to mention, my horse seemed wet behind the ears in its new environment. It might've never left the Shepherd stables until now.

Nonetheless, we kept at what Stahl said was a "decent" pace if the others weren't too far ahead of us. Not that I fully believed we were making good time.

In my head, anytime Stahl wasn't with the rest of the group helping in what should be an upcoming battle was time that could potentially get someone killed. One less able body in a small party like the Shepherds could potentially mean the difference between victory and defeat. Granted they should have Auden along with them, there's always the factor that Stahl might have something important that only he is supposed to accomplish. Also, since it was essentially my fault Stahl would be arriving so late made things worst on me.

This is what I get for being selfish! I should've been more focused on what's happening in this world rather than thinking about what gear to buy!

As I beat myself up for my lack of responsibility, Stahl had slowed himself to a stop as he got within eyesight of something that caught his attention.

Naturally, I guided my horse to a slow stop next to him as well. If there was anything my horse was hoping for at this point, it was stopping.

Both Stahl and I had stopped at what seemed to be the top of a hill and in front of us was a small valley with a river running right through it. Of course there was a decently long bridge and a couple of forts stationed on both sides of the river in front of us.

No doubt about it, this is definitely heading the right way.

Both of our horses let out loud snorts and mine even started to turn around to head back the way we came. I instinctively directed the horse back in the direction we were originally heading with some resistance met from the horse.

Are they spooked? Man, even horses can tell what's about to happen. Guess I'm not so special in that regard after all.

Without making any remark on our horse's behavior, Stahl pointed down the hill in front of us.

"See that?" he asked me.

I squinted my eyes in an attempt to see further down the hill and closer to the bridge. It was a fair distance away so it was

hard to tell, but I could definitely make out a few figures at the bottom of the valley. It's safe to say that the figures were definitely spread out and in some sort of scuffle already.

"Yeah," I replied slowly, "and I don't like it."

Stahl grabbed the reins of his horse tightly as he replied, "Me neither. Come on, Vincent. We've gotta hurry and help them."

He snapped the reins of his horse and it took off down the hill as fast and safely as it could. The hill was hardly at any inclination so it wasn't difficult for the large animal.

"Well, better to not let him run in on his own right, buddy?" I asked the animal that I had been riding all this time with a slight pat on its neck as well.

I snapped the reins and I had expected my horse to go, but it merely stood in place.

Eh?

I looked down to what I try to affectionately think of as my "animal friend" with a bizarre expression at its lack of movement.

Ok, you just need a little more coaxing.

I eased the back of my feet into the horse's muscles a little more to try and get it to move, but it snorted and stomped one of its hooves impatiently.

"Come on! I can't have you sitting around while everybody else is down their fighting! Move!" I yelled as I slapped the butt of my horse swiftly.

This caused my horse to pull its entire body up until it was only on the back of its legs. This swift motion almost caused me to lose my balance and fall off the horse, but I clung on to it for dear life.

Why did I have to get the horse that doesn't listen?!

I cursed my luck and got brought myself off of clinging to the horse and held merely onto the reins once again. What I hadn't realized yet was that my previous action to the horse I was riding on had quite possibly frightened it to no end as it started to run straight down the hill with me trying to hold on.

Holy-! I only wanted a quick way down the hill! Not a blind charge! Slow down!

I tried controlling the horse but it fiercely resisted. It was completely impossible to get anything through to it. Not even my frantic cries would stop it from charging straight ahead.

Quickly, I found it difficult to keep my eyes open in fear of what I was being charged into. I attempted to locate Stahl and soon came to realize that he had already made it into the heat of the battle unlike me.

With no hope of being able to stop or slow down the wild beast that I was riding on, I thought it might be better to simply jump off. That idea was shot down when I thought of how easily I could be injured going this fast.

I'd be lucky to get rolled out of here in a full body cast! Wait, there's healing magic here. If I lived the fall and was found, I could maybe get out of this okay. No, I know my luck and it's shit.

My other option was to look for help from others around. Stahl's already out of the question, but maybe there's someone else.

L-Looks like there's some people in front of me! Good! W-Wait, they could be Risen. This could be bad…

The wild beast under me continued to lead me into its charge that went straight for two figures. One of the figures seemed shorter than the other and looked to be on the retreating end.

Either Risen like to play tag with each other or the one running away is an ally.

I got closer to the figures within mere seconds at the speed I was going and found myself able to discern the two's identities in the same time. One was a short blond haired girl carrying a staff that was on the fleeting end of a crazed swordsman. The swordsman had very clear red eyes which was all I needed to know that he was Risen.

Lissa! Crap… It's never a good sign when the cleric of the group is being chased off. Things can't be going so well.

While I was only but a good ten more seconds away from Lissa and the Risen that was pursuing her, I drew my sword out of its sheath while I held onto my horse's reins with my other hand. It was difficult to do so, but I held my sword up as I rode. I was ready to hopefully get a good clean blow onto the Risen as I rode past it.

It was all mere convenience that the Risen had positioned itself on my right. If my timing is right, I should pass right by it from behind.

My heart beat grew faster and without another moment's notice, I had begun to make the pass on the Risen. I swung my sword in an arc to cleave through the Risen before it realized what even happened.

My sword swing was perfectly timed and well placed. As I passed the Risen, My sword connected directly into and it lifted the Risen off the ground for a mere second.

At the same time my horse stopped its mad charge as it started to turn around all on its own. It was very clear to me that I hadn't accidentally done so as I had little to no intention of trying to control the feral animal. All I cared for was keeping my own balance right so that I didn't fall off.

As the horse turned around, I noticed that I had easily felled the Risen pursuing Lissa as it faded away like all the others when they're killed.

Crazy horse must've noticed it was heading straight into what it wanted to avoid in the first place. Besides that, what I just did was awesome! I never thought I could pull off something as cool as that!

While I quietly praised myself for my handiwork, Lissa quickly rushed to the side of my horse and broke me from my stupor with her voice.

"Vincent!" Lissa said loudly.

I shook my head a couple of times as I stopped my mental praising of myself and looked at the girl to my side.

"Oh, uh… No, need to say thank you. Tis' all in a day's work," I replied with a slight smirk while trying not to sound like the most cliché superhero ever.

"Thank you?!" Lissa asked in a loud questioning tone.

"You're welcome?" I said slightly confused as I copied her tone.

Before I could even think of a reason for why she's practically yelling at me, my focus was swiftly brought onto a familiar looking cleric's staff coming straight for my face. In the blink of an eye, I was walloped with Lissa's staff right on the nose.

"Why would I say thank you?! Where were you!? I was running for so long! I didn't think I'd be able to run for so long!" Lissa speedily said as she continued to swing her staff at me.

I weakly attempted to block each swing but after being hit with a surprise attack, that really stung might I add, it was difficult to say the least.

"I'm sorry!" I repeated the same line over again and again until the girl would let up in her violent assault. Thankfully, she did and I felt as though I had just survived a boss battle.

"I thought that I was going to get chopped up into tiny little pieces," Lissa said after calming down a little from having used me as a punching, or in this case whacking, bag.

"It'd be a little hard to get you any smaller," I said with a small grin as I scratched my face with my left hand.

This made Lissa reform her previous look of anger as she raised her staff to resume what she had just stopped.

I immediately stopped smirking and flailed in protest as I frantically said, "Kidding! I was kidding!"

My quick show of weakness calmed Lissa as she must've decided to let my small remark go.

As I felt safe from the girl next to me again, I sat myself up straight on my horse and looked around.

Looks like there isn't any other Risen near us. Wait. What's that?

In a short distance away from Lissa and me, there was a man running directly towards us. The man was running in the same direction Lissa had previously been going meaning they were probably following as she was being chased.

The man's eyes weren't glowing red so I didn't think it was an enemy. I was certain it was another Shepherd.

The man stopped running a few feet away from me and Lissa and dropped his hands to his knees as he let out ragged breaths. He held his head barely up as he looked directly at the ground. In one of his hands was a short sword that's handle was being pressed against his knees as well.

"Thank Naga… you're safe… I didn't think… anything could run such a distance. Damn thing… ran right by me while its buddy attacked me. Please accept my apologies," the man said in between his gasps for air.

Guessing this was the person that should've been covering Lissa. It says a lot when I'm the one that has to fix another's mistakes. Especially when I make so many of my own.

"It's alright, Auden. I don't blame you," Lissa said with a small smile.

"Auden?" I said feeling slightly surprised.

The exhausted man in front of me and Lissa finally raised his head up giving me an easy time discerning who he was. It would be hard for me to forget the beard man himself.

I'm surprised because if Auden was supposed to protect Lissa then that means he wasn't doing such a good job until I got here. That's a bit of a shocker in my eyes.

"Vincent!" Auden said with a slight smile as he drew his attention to me on my horse. He continued after he straightened himself and coughed a few times with, "Surprised to see you here. Somewhere in my head I had thought you would've wanted to stay back at the HQ when you didn't come along with the rest of us."

"Yeah, well I probably would've if it wasn't for-"I stopped trying to explain myself as I realized what Auden had just said. My expression on my face changed to a scowl as I glared at the beard man in front of me and said, "Hey, what's that supposed to mean?!"

Auden quietly laughed before he quickly got serious, "Nothing. Look, we can have idle chit-chat latter. We should regroup with Robin immediately."

Somehow, even I was able to calm myself and return my thoughts back onto the battle we were in.

He's right. No point in sitting around. Before that, however…

I carefully dismounted my horse and held it only by the reins.

If there's more fighting to do, I think it might be best for me and the horse if I wasn't riding it.

Needless to say, my horse was still unpleased about being in the situation it was in so it tried to pull away.

"To stubborn for you?" Auden asked me while I tried calming the horse.

"You could say that," I answered back while trying to calm the beast.

"Calm on now! This is no time for a tantrum!" I said as the horse continued to try and escape my grasp.

"Maybe it's the other way around," Lissa said as she motioned for me to stand back.

I complied with the girl merely because I didn't want to get stomped by a horse. Also, there was the slight chance that I could get smacked again if I didn't listen.

She took the reins from me and slowly petted the horse while quietly shushing it. The horse was quick to warm up to her as it quit trying to thrash around. In a blink of the eye, Lissa had the horse calmed down and was offering the reins of it back to me.

"Being a princess has more perks than just getting to wear beautiful dresses. We also have to practice handling horses almost constantly for some royal events. You can say I'm practically like a horse whisperer!" Lissa said with a bright smile as she offered the reins to me.

I was at a loss for actions. My eyes blinked once, then twice, and then a third time when I still couldn't realize how easily

she accomplished what I had tried.

That horse was about to crap itself a second ago! How is it so calm now!?

Auden patted me on the back while he laughed and said, "A woman's touch will always find its way into anything's heart!"

I clenched my fist silently on my side as I cursed the horse that I had considered to be a feral beast for being so easily calmed by someone else.

Damn you horse. You just have to go and make me look like a brute.

Before I let myself get caught up in funnily getting mad at an animal that probably couldn't even understand my language, I released my clenched fist and pushed Lissa's hands away. She looked to me bizarrely as she continued to hold the horse's reins.

"Maybe you should just ride it. You've got way more experience than me, "I told Lissa with a small smile.

"Huh? But, I mean... It's your horse. You should be the one-" Lissa tried to offer the reins to me again before I stepped back.

"It'll be better for you. You can get away a lot faster on the horse than on foot. Besides, that means less running," I said as I smirked slightly to the shorter girl in front of me.

Lissa furrowed her eyebrows at my comment that seemed to poke fun at her running abilities. She stopped, however, when she turned back to the horse that had been quietly standing behind her. With a small sigh, she hopped on top of the horse and situated herself quickly.

You have just been re classed to troubadour! Congrats!

"Great, just stay close behind us. Also, if anything comes after you, don't feel bad about riding away from us. You're the healer so you're safety is just a little higher than mine Just try to come back if I get stabbed," I said with a smirk while putting a bit of emphasis on the word little.

"Hmm… I'll think about it," Lissa said while putting a finger next to her face to emphasize that she was thinking.

This made my smirk vanish for a second as my face changed to one of horror.

Please! If I'm left bleeding on the ground, Vaike will shove more of that dishwater healing stuff down my throat!

Seeing my reaction to her jesting she smiled and said, "Kidding! It's my job to keep everyone in one piece! I'll help you."

I then relaxed as I realized that she was indeed merely jesting with me. With that all aside, I turned to face Auden who was itching to get going already.

"Alright, no more wasting time. We need to get back to the front lines where Robin and the others should be," Auden quickly said as he started to run back the direction he and Lissa had come from.

I followed as fast as I could behind the beard man and Lissa followed closely behind me on her horse. We were still a good distance away from the bridge across the river which is what I assumed would be where we would be meeting up with robin before tackling the two forts.

"Kind of surprised on the lack of Risen around here. You guys take out a lot already?" I asked Auden while running behind him.

Seemingly my voice reached his old ears as he answered back, "That's cause we're far in the backfield of the battle! All the fighting is happening in front of us!"

So that's why Lissa ran this way. It would be the smartest idea to run into your own back field since that has the lowest chance for other enemies to be in.

In a few minutes of running we made it back to what appeared to be the leaders of our group standing shortly before the bridge heading across the river. Robin, Chrom, and Sumia were standing in a close knit group.

Sumia had only but a spear in her hands as she stood in the back of the group seemingly ready to attack if any Risen got to close.

Chrom had his falchion at the ready and was intercepting any creatures that tried to approach from the bridge.

Finally, Robin stood in the middle of the group with a book in one hand a small sword in his other. The book's pages rapidly flipped as he held it open and electricity gathered around it. With a quick, almost thrusting, motion he shot out a bolt of electricity that slammed directly into a Risen that was trying to cross the bridge to our side of the river. The Risen's body was left smoldering for a few seconds as it lay lifeless on the ground before it faded away.

"Nice work, Robin!" Chrom shouted back to his tactician.

Robin let out an audible sigh of exhaustion as he seemed to be at this for probably longer than he would prefer.

As Robin found a moment for a short break, Auden, Lissa, and I got within shouting distance. Auden was the first to call out with, "Robin!"

This caught the tactician's attention as he turned around. He let himself momentarily smile as he said, "It's good to see you guys again. Chrom and I had begun to worry when we couldn't see you."

"Lissa!" Chrom said as he turned to look to us after he finished dispatching of a spear wielding Risen.

He quickly ran back to us and spoke in a relieved mood, "I'm glad to see you're safe. It was unnerving when I turned around to see you had vanished."

"I'm perfectly fine, Chrom, You don't have to worry about me all the time," Lissa replied in the usual "I'm not some little girl" attitude.

"You're right, but as your brother I still worry," Chrom told his sister who outwardly understood.

"It was my fault," Auden said as we came to a running stop next to him. He continued as he said in a frustrated tone, "There was just one more than I could keep my hands on. I apologize for any worry I might've caused."

Robin shook his head a couple of times before he replied," It's not your fault. As long as you're safe we can all keep our minds at ease."

After Robin had stopped Auden from beating himself up over his mistake, he turned his attention to me. He said, "Vincent, it's great that you're here. Stahl told me you made it here as well. That just makes things a bit easier for my plan."

"Great, I'll help out in any way I can," I answered him as I raised my sword up.

He nodded in affirmation to my action, but before he could explain any part of his plan Chrom shouted out while pointing, "More of them coming down the bridge!"

Indeed, Chrom wasn't lying. There was multiple Risen running across the bridge towards us. There wasn't terribly too many, but it looked like they were coming out in waves at us. If tower defense games taught me anything, it's that the waves get harder and harder after each one.

"Quick, Auden, Vincent, help Chrom! This is where we make our push across the bridge! Don't worry Miriel and Virion are covering from the sides!" Robin shouted as he readied another spell.

When I looked to my sides, I could definitely see Virion and Miriel both on sides of the bridge volleying ranged attacks at the risen on the bridge and even some of the ones back at the forts.

They've got some killer range. I just hope they don't hit me on accident.

"Vincent, get moving!" Robin yelled to me as Auden had already apparently taken off down the bridge to assist Chrom in intercepting our attackers.

Ugh! Why do I have to be one of the people charging in!?

"This fucking sucks!" I said as my own apparent battle cry.

I ran forward knowing full well that I'll be having to stop on a moment's notice.

Past my head a bolt of electricity shot past me and struck a Risen directly in the head. I knew the attack came from Robin, but the suddenness of it made me almost want to duck straight to the ground to avoid losing my own head.

Further ahead I could see a few archers on the top of the forts next to the bridge. One got plucked by an arrow from Virion it would seem as it fell over. The others that weren't hit volleyed their own shots at me, Chrom, and Auden on the bridge. The arrows were wide and didn't strike me, but it made me make a mental note of them.

Auden and Chrom had a head start and were much faster than me so they had already started to fight a couple of Risen on the bridge. Only one other Risen was in our immediate vicinity and it was somewhat closer to me. It seemed to have all bits and purpose on simply running forward rather than gang up on Auden and Chrom.

Well that's slightly polite of him. Wait. He's not doing that on purpose. This unintentionally mannered zombie just wants to attack the others behind us! That slimy bastard!

As the risen and I ran towards each other, I prepared myself to come to a halting stop as soon as I was within range with my sword.

Before we collided with each other I took note of its weapon. It was holding a sword that was deadly similar to my own meaning we were on equal standing ground in that regard.

We approached each other in our sprint and I knocked my sword into his and locked our blades close to the guards of our blades.

The Risen in front of me was far more forceful in pushing its sword against mine. If I let up even a little, I'll get my own sword pushed back into me.

Okay, keep it quick. You just need to be fast and precise. Man, I wish I took some kind of swordplay club in high school now.

With my brief bit of training with Vaike in mind and the very small knowledge of how swordplay should be in my head, I tried to use any of it to my advantage.

Quickly, I decided on trying to push out the Risen's elbow to force it's sword to swing away from me. I took my hand off my sword for a second and pushed as hard as I possibly could on the undead soldier's elbow.

At the same time, I strafed my body to the left as I pushed its arm out to the right. This caused our swords to unlock as his went straight down to my right side.

I thought to myself that this was my chance so I gripped my sword in both of my hands again and prepared to swing my sword directly into the Risen's neck.

Before I had a chance, I noticed the Risen about to swing its sword back up from its downward position. I took note of this and brought my blade on to his before he had a chance.

The Risen growled quietly into my face as it grew impatient with me.

As I had its sword locked close to the ground, I once again took one of my hands off my own blade too look for more ways of disrupting my opponent. It then' donned on me that I could grab his blade's grip and counter where he wanted to swing it.

I did just this as I placed my hand on the bottom of the Risen's sword. I twisted my wrist to keep the blade's weight going down as I pulled my own blade back for a quick thrust into the Risen's mouth that was constantly open from its growls. The quick thrust was enough to kill the Risen as it faded slowly away.

Wow, if sword fights are all like this, I think this just might be my cup of tea. Playing dirty is built into my system! Oh, God! Keep running!

An arrow flew directly into the bridge next to my feet and reminded me that I need to keep moving forward. Before I could make it much farther to catch up with Chrom and Auden, however, there was another Risen coming closer to me. This one held a long spear.

Crap… I really don't want to get impaled by that.

It stumblingly ran towards me with its long spear in both of its hands ready to stab anything that was in front of it.

I ran forward to get more ground covered across the bridge before I had to deal with the enemy in front of me. This wasn't much of a distance though as I had stop in almost a few seconds to bring up my sword as a defense.

Best to not run into range of that thing. His reach easily trumps mine.

The spearman Risen continued in its run and, when it could, it thrust it's spear straight for my abdomen. To deflect this I held the tip of my sword with one of my hands and pushed the incoming spear to my right.

Feeling satisfied that I had an opening, I moved forward to attack the Risen. The risen, however, had different ideas and instead swung his spear's pole into my sword to knock it away from my side before pulling it back in one swift motion. The head of his spear glazed directly past my side and cut into my gut. The immediate sense of pain made me instinctively freeze up in my forward advance as I reached my left hand to over to my wound.

Blood immediately started to seep out of my wound and onto my hand.

Damn. I shouldn't have brushed aside his spear so easily.

After having retracted his weapon, the Risen prepared for another thrust attack.

Moving out of its way was my first priority, but it was made difficult thanks to my new wound. However, I still managed it as I stumbled slightly to my right out of the spear's way.

This time when the spear passed me I wanted to somehow make sure it wouldn't be able to do so again.

Not rightly seeing any other options, I reached out with my bloodied left hand and grabbed the shaft of the spear. I was then engaged in a game of tug of war with the Risen as he tried to pull his weapon back while I tried to pull him towards me.

I attempted to push the spear out wide to my left, but that wasn't being had by the Risen either. He had more control over his own weapon since he was holding it closer to the base while I had a grip somewhere in the middle of it.

Ah, screw it!

I grunted loudly as I pushed the portion of the spear near me up with my left hand. I was met with resistance from the Risen trying to push it back down but I managed to get the spear up higher and over my head.

While keeping my left hand gripped onto the spear to keep it well above me, I slid it down as I pushed closer to the risen until finally my sword stabbed it directly through its chest. The Risen growled for a second or two before it started to change to dust and vanish in front of me.

After having defeated my second Risen I felt relieved and almost calm for anymore that might come. It was, however, startling when I heard a whizzing sound coming directly towards me. It was the same sound that all the previous arrows that have flown past me made.

The sound jolted my heart back into a panic as I could feel the inevitable coming towards me.

What caught me off guard, however, was a loud tink. A noise that sounded as though the arrow previously meant for me had struck against a highly metallic surface.

I checked my body to make sure I wasn't merely hallucinating. The arrow definitely didn't hit me so my mind wasn't simply playing tricks on me. Also, as far as I know, I don't have some sort of metal plating covering my body somewhere.

I couldn't quite tell where the arrow had actually hit so I simply assumed it flew directly past me.

Speaking of arrows, I decided to look up at the archers on top of the forts and saw that there was only actually two left. The two archers that, when I looked, were met with a fireball and an arrow from our two dedicated ranged attackers.

The tops of the forts were cleared and the bridge had little to no Risen remaining. Auden and Chrom were only a good ten feet ahead of me surveying the surroundings on the other side of the bridge. Chrom finished looking around and turned back as he gave a motion with his hand. It was his go ahead for the rest of us behind to come across.

Not wanting to keep them waiting, Robin and the rest of us in the back moved forward to the other side of the bridge next to the two forts on this side of the river.

I kept my left hand forced against my side as I walked over. I was the first to reach Chrom and Auden while the others hurried to cross the remainder of the bridge.

Auden looked to be visibly winded as he gripped his chest with one hand and let out ragged breaths with each passing second. As I approached the two, I asked in a bit of worry, "Feeling alright, Auden?"

"Yeah… Just feeling a bit out of it. That's all," Auden answered while trying to catch his breath.

"You've fought enough, Auden. Take a break, friend," Chrom said to Auden while reaching one of his hands on to the taller man's shoulder.

"Of course. A break. That sounds good," Auden said as he stopped gripping his chest and crouched to the ground.

"Starting to finally sound your age there, buddy," I said in a joking manner.

Auden gave me a sly look as he replied, "My age? You act as though I could be your grandfather."

"Well, from up here. Your grey hairs speak differently," Chrom said with a laugh as I joined in.

Both Auden and I, however, stopped when we both coughed at roughly the same time. His cough being probably from his exhausted state while my own was from my side injury giving me pain from my laugh.

After a quickly ended bit of laughter, Auden cocked his head to observe me holding my side. He asked with a bit of concern, "That wound feeling alright?"

Feeling a bit caught off guard by his sudden concern for my light injury, my eyes widened a bit slightly before I returned back to a calm state.

"This? Tis' but a flesh wound!" I said with bit wider of a smile than a normal person would have on if they were just recently injured in a battle.

Both Auden and Chrom gave me bizarre looks as I held onto my smile before Chrom barely managed to point to my side and say, "That's a lot of blood for just a flesh wound."

I slowly looked to where my hand covered my wound and saw more blood dripping out of me than before. I lost my cool as I started to go slightly pale.

"W-Where's Lissa?! I'm gonna die! I'm sure to die!" I shouted as my paranoid mind made me believe I was losing too much blood.

Almost on cue, Lissa, Robin, and all the others had made it across the bridge and with us.

"Somebody call for a cleric?" Lissa asked with a smirk as she had apparently heard me. Her staff started to glow slowly before the glow moved over to my wound and sealed it quickly.

Thank the heavens...

"Thanks for that, Lissa," I said as I managed to calm down after being healed.

"It's all fine! Just try not to get cut up anymore! I'm keeping track of how many times I have to fix you up, got it?" She finished with a smile and a tilt of her head from atop the horse.

"Um… Yeah. I got it," I said as I now thought about their being a chalk board somewhere labeled, "Number of times Vincent was wrecked."

Somehow, I feel like that'll be a big number.

"Now that we've made it across, we should wait for the others to regroup with us. They should be finished dispatching the Risen on the other side of the river," Robin said with a smile at our small victory.

So that's where everybody else is. I figured they must be fighting somewhere. I simply didn't know where.

"Until then," Robin turned to Miriel and Virion whom had also crossed the bridge, "You two should take up post on the tops of these forts to get a good look at the area ahead of us. Let us know what you spot out, and dispatch of any Risen that start to come into range."

Both Virion and Miriel merely nodded as they quickly entered the forts to our sides and ascended them to the top.

"The rest of us will keep this position safe until the others show up," Robin addressed the rest of us. We all agreed with Robin's plan and took up positions to guard. Everyone except Auden who still seemed to have exhaustion problems. He was told explicably by Chrom to get rest inside one of the forts.

It didn't take terribly too long for the rest of the Shepherds to regroup with us on the other side of the river. Frederick had supposedly met resistance on his side, but had managed to take care of it when Stahl showed up to assist.

That says a lot if Frederick has trouble…

Sully had grouped up with Vaike to take care of another flank. Vaike was the only other to have gotten injured like me. To him the injury was merely, "A stroke of bad luck for Ol' Teach here!" He had healed it as soon as he possibly could, however, with a vulnerary in his traditional way so it didn't hamper his fighting abilities.

That meant the entire side we had crossed from was cleared of Risen. All that was left was the group of Risen in front of us. Virion and Miriel had spotted them further up the hill merely waiting. They identified one that looked different from all the rest. Robin had discerned that it must be the leader.

The group had nothing, but melee fighters in the group. Not a single ranged fighter was with them. That could easily explain why they weren't attacking us from where they were. Still, their group was decently sized. If all of our possible fighters were to head in, we would only have a number advantage of one.

Currently, we were all hold up inside one of the forts to discuss a plan of some sorts. The only other not present was Virion whom was told to keep watch on the group of Risen. The group of Risen wasn't making any attempts at a forward approach it would seem so it gave us time to formulate some kind of strategy.

"The cavalry should head in first. It'll scatter their numbers quickly while the rest of you charge in," Sully suggested as her idea.

Robin shook his head in disapproval to the idea as he replied, "There's the chance they don't disperse. We don't know how Risen think. It could be they don't think at all as evidence by their fighting patterns. If they remain in a tight formation, any approaching cavalry could get injured."

We had been thinking of a plan for a couple of minutes by now and Vaike was visibly starting to get restless as he almost shouted his suggestion of, "Let's just go get them already! Frontal assault! Just the way Vaike likes it!" He held his axe up above his head as he seemingly awaited his standing ovation from the rest of us for his idea.

There was a long dead silence before almost everyone groaned simultaneously in annoyance at his idea.

"We already explained this, Vaike. On the top of the hill, they have the advantage if we simply charge them," Robin said as he tried to explain to the oaf that was Vaike for the second time.

"T-The Vaike knew that. He was just… testing you guys," Vaike said as he slowly lowered his axe and crossed his arms almost in frustration to how we all reacted to his plan.

"Can't we just sneak around them? I'm sure they won't notice us from the distance they're at if we head further down the river from here," I attempted to suggest not wanting to face a squad of Risen nor their leader.

Robin looked to Chrom almost waiting for his opinion on my suggestion.

Chrom returned Robin's look before addressing the rest of us with, "We can't leave this group of Risen unattended. They could injure, or worse, potentially kill unsuspecting travelers that might pass by here. It's our duty as Shepherds to eliminate them."

I sighed audibly in exhaustion as I slumped down against a barrel that was inside the fort we were holed up in.

The planning continued with Stahl as he said, "Maybe we could lure them over into a trap. You know, like when you lure a rabbit over with a carrot under a box. You trap it right in the box when it goes for the carrot!"

Lissa replied to Stahl almost immediately, "Just because you can get tricked with a little bit of food doesn't mean these things will, Stahl!"

"Oh, sorry. It might just be my stomach talking," Stahl almost nervously said with a smile as he patted his gut.

We're getting nowhere extremely fast… How did these guys do anything without a tactician before?

"If the enemy doesn't have any ranged capabilities, why don't we leave it to our own ranged fighters to thin them out before we lead a charge?" Auden quietly suggested from his resting spot atop one of the other barrels in the room.

"If Virion and Miriel feel confident enough in their abilities to do so, then that might be our best bet," Robin stated after

thinking it over for a few seconds.

"Miriel? Uh… what are you doing?" Robin asked questioningly to the mage.

Miriel had been fiddling around with many different things in the fort we had holed up in while we continually discussed ideas. She was currently looking into the barrel I had slumped down next to when Robin called out to her.

Miriel placed the lid back down onto the barrel before she slightly adjusted her glasses and said, "I've merely been procuring what items we have at our ready while formulating what could be beneficial to some of our ideas we've had so far. Except for Vaike's. That idea was, simply put, atrocious in how bull-headed it was." She practically glared at Vaike when she finished speaking bringing Vaike's attention to what she had just said.

Being somewhat close in proximity to Vaike I heard him grumble something as Lissa giggled quietly at Ol' Teach's behavior.

Robin, on the other hand, was almost left to gawk as Miriel explained to him just what was at their disposal inside the fort. She explained which resources could be useful for each idea that was somewhat usable. After Robin had heard her explanations on everything, he took a moment while he formulated some sort of plan inside his tactician mind.

"Well, Robin?" Chrom called out to his tactician that had been thinking for some time now.

Robin smiled as he seemed to have finished devising a plan and stated, "All finished. Everybody, here's what we're going to do."

We all listened intensely to Robin as he told us his plan that he had come up with. My jaw nearly fell off when I heard the details of it.

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Frederick, Sully, Stahl, and I had all gotten on to our horses in that exact order from left to right. The rest of the Shepherds waited on the end of the fort that faced the bridge we had crossed. Virion had remained on top of one of the forts to provide as a spotter of some kind.

This was all a part of Robin's "masterful" plan. It was a plan that I had myself questioning why I had to be included in it.

"All right, guys. Everything's all good on our end. Go whenever you're ready," Robin said giving us the go ahead.

"Merely stay close to me. I will draw their attention, " Frederick informed the rest of us on mounts.

"Well? You girlies ready?" Sully asked me and Stahl with a grin added to her teasing.

"I'm fine for whenever. Vincent? What about you?" Stahl asked me.

"I suppose I'm fine as well, but…" I looked down to my steed in an attempt to look for it's own approval to the current situation. Maybe I wasn't looking for that. Maybe I just wanted the horse to somehow gain sentience for one moment and say loudly, "Fuck that shit! I'm not doing that," for me.

Alas, the horse remained unsurprisingly quiet except for the few whinnies it did in response to me putting my face so close to its. Lissa had coaxed the horse into a calmer state before we all got ready so it seemed to be perfectly responsive to my commands unlike when it got so startled.

"Uh… Yeah, I guess we're all ready," I said in an almost defeated tone.

God, or Naga I guess, if you're listening, at least make sure no pigeons crap on my tombstone. That'd be nice. Thanks in advance.

"Let's be off then!" Frederick said as he started off toward the group of Risen. Sully and Stahl followed shortly behind him while I trailed a bit further behind.

We traversed up the hill towards the risen that stayed still in their position at the top. As we neared them, one of them must have noticed us as the rest of them turned to face us. They waited expectantly with their weapons drawn.

When we got to the specified range, Frederick halted in his approach and the rest of us did the same. For a split second, we had a staring contest with the Risen.

Nothing's gone against the plan yet.

"Taste steel foul creatures!" Frederick shouted as he tossed a hand axe towards one of the Risen. The weapon flew quickly through the air. It flew far too quickly for an undead soldier to react as it struck one directly in the forehead. The Risen crumpled to the ground before it faded it away leaving a spot in their formation where a body used to be.

Silence.

Again, we broke into a staring contest with the creatures in front of us.

"They still aren't moving," Stahl said as he moved to Frederick's side.

The great knight fiercely stared down our enemies in front of us, but they didn't flinch.

"I don't like this. I have a foul taste in my mouth about this situation," Frederick said as he motioned for us to all start backing up.

Is this a trap? Wait. Risen coming up with a trap? I don't know about that. W-Whoa. Are they staring at me?

As the four of us backed up, I noticed that the Risen weren't staring at us all but more of just me. Their red eyes seemed fixated on only me.

Am I the weak link or something? What's the deal here?!

"Grgh… Kill… new one… Grggh!" The Risen chief growled out from behind his grunts.

That means… ummm… Well they could be talking about… Ah, fuck. I can't think of any excuse for that! They want my head on a silver platter! Fuck!

The group of Risen took a step forward in a slightly surprisingly synchronized motion, their eyes were all still trained on me.

"There! We've got their attention," Sully said in slight joy as she readied herself to run back down the hill we came up.

"Right. It would seem we managed to anger the bee hive," Frederick said as he followed Sully's example.

They have bees here too? Wait. Shut up. Bees aren't nearly as terrifying as undead things right now! Time to book it!

Stahl and I both managed to turn ourselves around before the Risen approached us and we started in our way together back down the hill towards the river. As we started to make our retreat, the Risen started off in a full blown charge.

"Come on! You won't catch us running like that!" Sully yelled back to the undead soldiers following us close behind.

"Sully, please don't make them try harder!" I shouted in response to the red head further ahead of me.

"Psh… I'm just tryin' to make it a little more exciting. You don't have to go and piss your pants back there," Sully said as she stopped trying to egg on our enemies.

"H-Hey, I'm not-" I attempted to defend myself from Sully's comment but was cut off swiftly.

"Quiet you two! We're nearing the forts!" Frederick said completely silencing me and Sully.

Crap. I have to be further up ahead! I'm trailing behind and too close to the Risen!

I was the furthest in the back of our little group and that meant I was the closest to the Risen that already displayed desire in wanting to probably kill me. I could almost hear their armor clanging behind me louder than the stomping our horses were producing.

"Ok, look. I know you might not like me that much, but we'll both die if you don't run faster!" I spoke into the ear of the horse I was riding on.

Somewhere in my head this seemed like the best solution. As if talking to the animal would make it go faster since I was already doing all I could think of in controlling it to be faster. It sounded idiotic, but actually seemed to produce results when I started to pull back into the group and away from danger.

"They're coming!" Virion shouted from atop the fort as we got closer.

Our horses made it in between the forts and the Risen followed us exactly. We sped past the forts quickly and went onto

the bridge where we came to a halting stop. The Risen continued in their pursuit.

"Now!" Robin shouted as he and Chrom lit barrels quickly before the two groups behind each fort pushed them out and into the path of the Risen.

The barrels rolled into their direct path and blew up into a cloud of fire and finally smoke. The previous loud noises of armor clanging against itself had vanished into the thick cloud of freshly made smoke. The smoke dissipated and not a single Risen was left in the vicinity.

We won? God… I feel like my racing heart might stop working altogether after that.

At the sign of victory almost everyone was visibly pleased. Some, mostly just Vaike, let out a victory yell.

"Great work on that plan, Robin," Chrom said as he walked over to his tactician to pat him on the back. Almost everyone gave Robin compliments for his well thought out plan.

"It was nothing. Really," Robin said as he tried to pass off everybody's flattery, "I just took everybody's ideas and combined them. It couldn't have happened without everybody else. Especially not without Mireil. She's the one that knew the barrels could be blown up."

"I recognized the substance from some of my experiments. Its chemical constitution was highly stable so I knew it would be easy," Miriel explained to us.

Everyone was left to blankly stare at Miriel before she explained, "It was easy to explode."

"Oh," Everyone said simultaneously.

"Anyways, what Robin said was incredibly true. You all fought greatly," Chrom stated as he addressed his "troops" I suppose they'd be called.

"Does that mean we've earned a rest?" I asked hopefully.

"Hm?" Chrom turned his attention to me and laughed a little, "Sure, everyone's earned a rest!"

Everyone's faces lit up at the same time almost as if everyone all caught a whiff of the most amazing smelling pie in the world.

"After-" Chrom continued and quickly dashed away the amazing smelling pine, "we make it to the designated resting point on the map.

The group of Shepherds, besides Frederick, groaned in annoyance to their leader getting their hopes up and started to get ready to go back on the march.

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"So you hid the convoy before you started fighting?" I asked while I followed Robin from behind on top of Choc to a dense tree line.

Before it becomes confusing, Choc is the name I've allotted to the horse I've been riding this entire time. Naming him wasn't my choice as I'll explain later, but it is easier to call him a name than that horse.

Shortly after the battle was over, I discovered that my horse was a male and that he was indeed a new stable horse. He's still a bit of a young'un so he has a bit to learn from what I understand.

Onto why I had to name him, I was practically forced into naming him after Lissa was shocked to find out I hadn't even been thinking of any names. She made me think of a name on the spot. Also, she even told me that she was going to show me how to properly treat a horse during the trip I suppose.

"Yeah, it's not like we thought the Risen were going to rob us or anything, but it is better than leaving it unguarded," Robin said as he pulled some branches off of the wagon that was supposedly our convoy.

"I imagine "Grrr" wouldn't get a lot of robberies finished," I said jokingly as Robin finished uncovering the convoy.

Robin stifled a laugh at my joking before his eyes slightly lit up.

"By the way, didn't one of the Risen today say something? I heard Frederick say something about it to Chrom Did you

catch what it said?" Robin asked as he turned to me after uncovering the convoy.

Yeah, I know what it said. Do I want to tell Robin that? No. No, I don't. I already have my guess on what it means. I would rather not try to discuss what it could mean between everybody else.

"Oh, that? I don't really know. My entire focus was on trying not to die. You'll have to refrain from using me as future bait by the way. It's bad for my health I tell ya," I answered Robin with a lie as I changed the topic.

Robin laughed before he responded to me, "It's talk like that that'll make you even better future bait."

He started to lead the convoy down the hill and back to the rest of the Shepherds as I said seriously from a distance behind him, "No, seriously. Robin, I don't want to have any more heart attacks during these plans of yours!"

I was completely ignored by our army's tactician in my entire endeavor to keep myself safe. Not once did he even humor me by telling me I wouldn't be in any other crazy plans.

Instead, we continued in the march to the north unaware of what was following us.

So, explanations are in order, correct? I believe I do owe some bit of a reason for why this chapter took so long. Firstly, I will always prioritize my own personal life over this site. Sorry, but I need to make sure I'm happy and alive before I can write anything. It's the truth for any writer unless they were brought back by a necromancer to write for them in which case, please direct me to one of these as I desperately would like one.

Another reason would be simply my writing ability in a nutshell. I stare at my computer until finally I get taken off in writing. It's like if you were waiting for the train but sometimes that train never comes and you're left waiting. It works wonders at times and other times can be increasingly frustrating. I've met others with this same problem and it can be an annoyance. This was another reason in my horribly long list of reasons why I continuously put off trying to write.

I can continue to bore you with my problems, but I'll save you the details. Writing can be strenuous and it gets even harder when you want to make those reading entertained. Coupled with real life, it can sometimes be easy to just say fuck it and be done with it.

In the end, I apologize deeply for leaving for such a long time. I hope to be able to continue making updates as I will try to my utmost ability to do so.

On a better note, leave a review on what you think of the chapter! I've been out of it for a good five or so months so it would be nice to know if I've still got it or if it's been lost on the previous page. Thank you though to those have already left reviews, tis' much appreciated!

Also, drop a PM if you have any suggestions or questions.

I'll be trying to write the next chapter as quickly as possible now. Hopefully this goes well. If not, send help.

Chapter 7: Thief in the Night

A much faster update than the last one. Hope you guys enjoy it.

Thanks for the reviews everybody! I guess I haven't lost it just yet. I'll keep on doing what I'm doing in that case.

I'm going to quickly get some thanks out of the way since I'm a bit happy to be back.

Thanks for the welcome back SilverFlameHaze.

I'm glad to see you review again Mark-Kris Robin. It's all much appreciated.

To make a quick response to Chasticot, thanks for the reviews by the way, I promise you there will be no pairing of Vincent with Lucina so you may rest easy now.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Thief in the Night

"There, there. You're doing great, Choc. Keep it up," I said as I stroked Choc's mane slowly during our march.

We had continued in our march to the north as we slowly drew closer to the cold wintery land that was Regna Ferox. Temperatures were slowly dropping with each step we took. Not only that, but the winds were starting to pick up as well as we exited from the forest and started on our way through some plains. Our next goal was to pass through some mountains that should be close to us by this point. Once we had accomplished that, we should be right on Regna Ferox's border.

Currently, I had taken up Lissa's help on assisting me to get Choc more accustomed to the army's lifestyle. She guided me in calming Choc and it seemed to be working. He was much calmer than before even though he was surrounded by loud people.

"Wow, I'm surprised," Lissa spoke from next to me as I rode on top of Choc.

"What? Am I doing something wrong?" I asked in slight worry that I wasn't following her directions well enough.

"No, you're doing great! I just expected you to be more impatient is all. Ugh! Darn it! Why are horses so stubborn?!" Lissa responded as she mimicked an apparently very grumpy me with foot stomps and all.

Do I really sound like that?

"I'm not that impatient," I said in response to her imitation of me.

"You were back at the bridge," Lissa answered back with a small laugh as she stopped mimicking what was supposed to be me.

"Well, that's different, you know? It's pretty hard to stay calm when there's a bunch of things trying to kill you," I stated as my excuse.

"I know, I know. It's just funny seeing freaked out you in comparison to calm you. Oh, man. Some of the faces you made during Robin's plan! They were priceless!" Lissa said as she busted out laughing.

"H-Hey! What about you huh? I seem to remember a certain princess getting flustered at a comment about her size," I retorted back to the girl laughing below me with a grin.

"What?! I was not! I was just still a little mad about being chased by that Risen! It had nothing to do with my height!" Lissa replied as she pouted slightly.

I laughed to her reaction as I said, "I'm sure if you were mad at the Risen you would've easily taken it out without my help!"

"Is that supposed to be sarcasm?" Lissa asked while still pouting.

"Are you kidding me? No, it's not sarcasm! You hit pretty hard with that damn staff!" I answered while pointing to her staff.

Lissa stopped her pouting fit as she looked at her own staff and gave it a few swings. She then said with a cocky smile, "Well, I do have a pretty killer swinging arm."

You're telling me.

"Thanks, by the way," Lissa said after she stopped smiling cockily and had a more serene instead.

"Thanks? For what? You'll have to help me remember. I think Robin's amnesia might be contagious," I said in slight confusion of what I deserve praise for.

"You helped save me from that Risen at the bridge! It happened like a couple of hours ago! How can you have such bad memory?!" Lissa said in surprise to my forgetfulness.

"Oh, yeah. I guess that did happen. Eh, it's whatever. No need for thanks," I said as I threw her thanks aside.

"No need?" Lissa asked in confusion.

"Yeah, the way I see it, you've helped fix me up twice now already, right?" I asked the girl walking beside me and Choc. She nodded yes in response.

"Then I still owe you one if that's the case. It can be a mutual benefit for both of us! You fix me and I help you," I continued.

"Hmm… Sounds good to me!" Lissa replied as she approved of what I had suggested.

"Then it's a deal!" I responded back.

"Everybody halt!" Chrom shouted from the front of our group.

Our entire convoy stopped dead in its tracks at Chrom's commands. Everyone stood firmly in their positions and eyed what their captain was looking at.

"Is that-" Lissa started as I finished, "- a Pegasus?"

Those of us in the back of the group moved forward to get a better look and, sure enough, it was indeed a Pegasus. The winged horse stood cautiously in the field in front of us as it carefully eyed us. By the look of how it was standing, it seemed it could have an injured leg.

Well, looks like we've found Sumia's Pegasus.

"She looks like she hurt her leg," Sumia said coyly.

"Here, I'll go inspect it," Chrom said confidently as he approached the wild animal.

The beast in front of our captain glared at him from afar and even took a step back when Chrom started to approach it.

"It's alright, we're here to help," Chrom spoke calmly when he finally got within a few feet of the Pegasus. He extended his hand out to the Pegasus to show he meant no harm.

Instead of accepting Chrom's offer of help, the Pegasus took it as an act of aggression when he extended his hand. Almost immediately the Pegasus reared back onto its hind legs and practically tried to stomp down onto Chrom. Luckily, our captain has quick reflexes and was able to get back far enough in time before he became a pancake.

"Whoa! Stay back everyone! This beast is possessed!" Chrom shouted back to the rest of us.

Unsurprisingly to me, Sumia stepped forward as she simply disobeyed her captain's orders.

"Captain, if I can please?" Sumia asked shyly as she continued forward until she tripped over… nothing? Yeah, no surprise there either.

"Sumia, are you alright? You should stay back. This creature doesn't seem welcoming," Chrom said as he helped Sumia up to her feet.

Sumia dusted off debris that had gotten onto her armor thanks to her spill before she also dusted off Chrom's hand holding her back.

"Please, Captain, I would like to give it a try," Sumia said as she left her worried Captain behind.

In a surprising, not really for me, turn of events, she actually managed to calm down the Pegasus.

"That was amazing!" Chrom said in shock to how quickly the Pegasus warmed up to Sumia.

Others in the group spoke words of amazement as well. All except Vaike who said, "The Vaike could've done that too!"

After she had accomplished calming the creature, she inspected the winged horse for any injuries and its leg was indeed badly hurt.

"Captain, its leg is badly hurt. If it'd be alright with you, I'd like to stay behind to help it," Sumia told Chrom.

"Yes, of course. Take as long as you need to. Just try to catch back up to us when you're finished," Chrom answered Sumia which made her smile brightly.

"T-Thank you, Captain! I'll be quick, I promise!" Sumia replied with determination in her tone.

"C-Chrom!?" I called out to Chrom.

"Hm? Yes, what is it Vincent?" Chrom asked as he turned to face me.

"Maybe it would be better if we just set up camp here. I just think if we're going to rest in a few hours anyways, we should maybe just do it now since Sumia will be here," I answered Chrom.

Chrom stifled a laugh as he smiled and responded, "Still trying to get that break are ya? Well, that sounds reasonable enough, but we'll have to move closer to the mountains. Better to rest there rather than in this open field."

Reasonable enough.

"Thank you," I replied back.

"Alright, let's get moving towards the mountains! We've gotta setup camp before night falls on us," Chrom commanded his army and we moved out shortly after.

It wasn't terribly difficult to get the hurt Pegasus moving with us thanks to Sumia. Also, it could fly so its hurt leg didn't hinder it too much.

We made it to the side of the mountains we were going to be passing through tomorrow in a short amount of time and managed to setup camp in an even shorter amount of time.

Frederick was like a blur setting this stuff up…

Tents were pitched in a circular pattern around a fire pit we made in the middle of them. Our wagon full of supplies was put up against the side of the mountain while our horses were tied up to keep them from wandering off. A quickly made fenced off area was made specifically for the Pegasus to rest in as well. Sumia stayed with the Pegasus for most of the night only being managed to be pulled away for food and rest.

The night was quick to go by as we ate some boar that Virion had managed to slay. People retired off to their tents quickly thereafter. There weren't enough tents for everyone to get their own so we were supposed to share. My tent mates were apparently Vaike and Stahl.

Vaike and I actually managed to get in some training after our dinner with the others. I didn't do as bad as I did last time as I actually managed to catch Vaike off guard a number of times. Still, the score that Vaike insisted on keeping was now 20-14.

After I called the end of our training, Vaike started to walk off to our tent. He looked back to me as I stayed seated on the ground.

"You coming back to the tent, Vince?" Vaike asked me.

"Nah, I think I'll stay up for a bit longer," I told Vaike.

"Hey, whatever works for you! The Vaike, however, needs his warrior sleep!" Vaike said with a grin as he flexed his arms' biceps.

I stifled a laugh to how ridiculous Vaike's warrior sleep sounded before I responded, "Yeah, yeah. I'll catch ya tomorrow."

"Hah! You betcha!" Vaike said as he wandered off back to our tent.

After the oaf that was my trainer finally made it inside of the tent, I let out a large grin as I lay myself down in the field. I stared up to the sky that was now darted with countless stars thanks to the lack of a lot of lighting around me.

That's something you don't get to see often. The true look of space above your head.

It was a great spectacle above me. The lack of cities with constant lights in this world meant you could perfectly see the stars above you. I lived in a suburban city and didn't get out of the house much so I I've only really experienced the stars in the city. There was one time when I actually did go camping away from any kind of city, but that was when I was little so I didn't really care much.

Still, to think that these guys get to experience this kind of sight every night was amazing to me. Their world was still so untainted in comparison to mine. Not to say I think my world is bad just the beauty of nature has been taken out of it in a lot of parts.

Honestly, I'd rather just stay up and look at this all night.

My new found interest in star gazing kept me relaxed as I simply stared up at the night sky. I only finally stopped when the camp's fire was beginning to die down in the distance causing it to be difficult for me to even tell where the camp was.

Better go tend to that if I intend on staying up.

Reluctantly and slowly, I got up to go and tend to the fire. I made it back in little time and managed to toss in some more firewood before the fire completely died down. The fire quickly rejuvenated as the flame brought a wave of heat across my body that caused me to settle down close to it to keep warm.

Well, I should be preparing now for the inevitable. I'll fall asleep and go back home for a bit of rest from the craziness. Still don't have a clue on what the deal with that is.

After a bit of sitting around the campfire I got up to put it out. The flame died and the only amount of illumination left was coming from the embers. I turned to walk slowly into the tent I was sharing with Vaike and Stahl. My foot entered into the tent carefully to not disturb anyone's slumber. I was a second away from putting my head into the tent when a noise caught my attention.

The sound was quiet but I still caught it. It was the sound of someone else opening up their tent. I had wondered whose tent it was as I looked around the camp. I expected to see someone take a step out of their tent but I didn't see anyone's figure in the darkness.

"Hello?" I asked quietly to maybe get the person's attention.

Nothing. The entire camp was deadly silent. Not even the horses were making any kind of noise.

I must've been up for too long. I'm starting to hear things!

I decided to dismiss my paranoia and continued on my way into my tent. It was in that very moment that a noise definitely caught my attention. It was somebody else's voice.

"Hello…" the voice said quietly from behind me.

A shiver ran down my spine as I slowly turned my head to see who it was. There standing behind me was a giant! A giant with short black hair that towered over me and sent fear directly into my soul! To make it all worse the giant was standing directly behind me in… pajamas?

"Um… hi?" I said in an unsure way.

"Did you hear that noise too?" the giant asked me.

"Um… Yeah, I think. Wait. Who are you? I asked the giant now in front of me as I stepped out of my tent.

"Huh? It's me. Kellam! I was there when you first joined!" Kellam said feeling a bit off by my lack of knowledge about him.

"Y-You were?!" I said feeling shocked as well.

"Yeah, I also was right next to you when that archer shot at us on the bridge. You didn't notice me at all?" Kellam asked.

That explains why I heard that arrow hit metal! I had a giant in armor standing right next to me!

"Oh, sorry. I never saw you around before. M-My name's Vincent though!" I said while extending my hand.

"It's ok. I get it a lot. I already know who you are," Kellam responded.

"O-Oh…" I said awkwardly as I pulled my hand away.

As Kellam and I were conversing, another noise sounded out in the camp. This time it was a bit louder and we both could tell from what direction it came from. It came directly from the front of Chrom's tent and was the sound of someone tripping as thy exited the tent.

I almost wanted to guess outright that it was Sumia leaving Chrom's tent, but something convinced me to refrain from saying that. That something was the sight of a sword being carried in the perpetrator's hands. It was hard to discern what sword it was, but it was clear the figure in the night wanted to steal it as they quickly bolted away from the camp and towards the path leading up into the mountains.

"Um… you saw that right?" a voice said from beside me.

I turned my head to see who it was and was shocked to see Kellam standing right there beside me!

"Kellam, when did you get here?!" I asked in surprise.

"I've been here… We were just talking a few seconds ago," Kellam answered me.

"Oh, yeah. Well, we have to go check on Chrom!" I replied.

We both rushed over to Chrom's tent and poked both of our heads into it. The others sleeping in Chrom's tent was Robin and Frederick. Robin was sprawled out in whichever direction his body could reach as he slept. Frederick, on the other hand, was sleeping almost perfectly with his sleeping bag being held up to his neck by his hands. Chrom was the only one sleeping normally in the tent.

"Guys, wake up!" I yelled to get their attention.

Fredrick's eyes bolted open as Chrom slowly awakened on his own as well. Robin carelessly continued to sleep as the others got up.

"What is it?" Chrom groggily asked.

"There had better be a good reason for disturbing milord's sleep," Frederick said as he glared at particularly me and not Kellam.

"We think that somebody ran out of your guy's tent holding something," Kellam answered for the paralyzed me.

"Kellam?! When did you get here?!" Both Frederick and Chrom simultaneously asked.

"No time!" I shouted as I recovered from being released from Frederick's glare, "Check around to see if anything's stolen!"

Chrom and Frederick wasted no time searching around their tent to find if anything was truly missing. In the meantime, Robin had awoken, I'll be it slightly, from all the yelling as well as the rest of the camp.

"What's going on?" Lissa asked as she rubbed her eyes.

"Yeah, what's with all the constant shouting huh?" Sully asked as she cracked her knuckles.

"We think there was a thief," I told them all.

It's obvious to say that everyone had their own unique reaction to the sound of a thief being around. It didn't take long, however, for the fighters of the group to get suited up to find this thief though.

"My sword! Falchion! It's gone!" Chrom shouted from inside his tent we had all crowded around.

"What?!" Everyone within the vicinity shouted.

"It's gone. Vanished. Which way did you say the thief took off to?" Chrom quickly asked me.

"Kellam and I saw him run up into the mountains," I responded as fast as I could.

"Damn! Those mountains are like a maze… Shepherds, split up into groups and gear up! We're going to find this thief!" Chrom commanded his army that was already half ready to mobilize.

God damnit! Who the hell would steal the Falchion?!

Without another moment to spare, we gathered up our gear and lit lanterns to help us in finding the thief. As we split up into groups, everyone collectively agreed it would be best if a few stayed behind to guard the camp while the rest of us split into three groups too hastily find the thief. Stahl, Miriel and Sumia were the three that volunteered to stay behind. Meanwhile, the other groups that were made were: Frederick leading Virion and Auden, Robin leading Vaike and Sully, and finally was Chrom in charge of me, Kellam and Lissa.

Our current party of nine quickly bolted into the mountains with those of us on mounts holding lanterns to light up the path and a couple of others holding spare lanterns. The path was windy as those of us on horses had to make sure to pay attention closely to it or else we'd go running off the path. None of us, however, fell off the path thankfully.

We made it to a slight intersection that split off. One went around the mountain we had been running along and the other was a small bridge that continued across to another mountain.

"The thief could've gone either way," Frederick observingly stated.

"We can't take any chances. Frederick, you lead your group down that path. The rest of us will continue on. If anything happens, we'll all meet back at camp. Got it?" Chrom quickly made orders as he obviously didn't want to waste any time.

"As you command, milord," Frederick stated before he, Virion and Auden made their way along the path circling around the mountain.

With our group now cut down by a third, we went across the bridge and continued on the path that headed north to Regna Ferox. The weather was quickly getting colder as the ground around us started to get piled up with snow. Not that it deterred Chrom or his army.

Everyone continued to run as fast as they could until we finally spotted something. It was a cloaked figure sprinting with what appeared to be a sword in both of his hands; a sword that looked incredibly close to Falchion.

"Chrom," Robin shouted as we continued to charge ahead, "That look like your sword?"

"No doubt about it! Halt, criminal!" Chrom shouted as he increased his running speed to catch up with the cloaked individual.

The light shining on him from our lanterns and Chrom's shouting must've alerted the cloaked individual to our presence as he darted his head back to see that he was indeed being pursued. After he had confirmed he was being chased, he too increased his running speed to hopefully outrun us.

Sully, however, wasn't going to allow this as she increased her horse's running speed as well and easily overtook me whom had been in the front this whole time. Her horse had started to close in on the cloaked individual when they dropped to the ground in a slide to avoid being clubbed in the head by Sully. They did manage to dodge her swipe, but were now prone on the ground allowing the rest of us to catch up.

"Good work, Sully," Chrom complimented his knight.

"Not a problem," Sully replied.

As we surrounded the cloaked individual still prone on the ground, we were able to get a better look at them. He was definitely a man judging by the face he had. Also, he had short blonde hair. His cloak also had noticeable Plegian symbols on the back of it.

Plegian bandits trying to steal swords now? What's the world coming to?

"I'll be taking that back now," Chrom said as he pointed a spare iron sword he had grabbed from our supplies down towards the back of the man's neck.

The cloaked man below Chrom was visibly shaking as he hurriedly crawled over the Falchion he was lying on top of. He got up and tried to run away but bumped directly into Kellam and recoiled back.

Chrom sheathed the iron sword he was wielding as he picked up his Falchion and spoke to the bandit, "You won't be getting away like that. Explain yourself or taste the cold justice of our blades."

"I-I just had to grab that sword. It's not like **I** wanted to do it! I had to!" The Plegian bandit responded nervously as he looked around at us all with our blades drawn. He seemed badly shaken up by all of this. At times he wouldn't even look one of us in our eyes as he constantly darted his head back and forth. Most of the time he would look directly towards the peak of the mountain. It was almost like he was looking for something.

I've got a bad feeling about this.

As a precaution to my ill feeling in my gut, I started to shine my lantern around the area we were in. I focused mostly on the slope of the mountain above us; I had the feeling that if there was an ambush it would be better to have the high ground on your enemy.

"Vincent, what are you doing?" Robin asked me as I shined my light around.

"I've just got a bad feeling about this. Just… Keep an eye out," I responded.

"Good idea. We should be careful if this is a trap," Robin said as he joined with me in looking around our surroundings.

Man there's a lot of snow, and there's a fair amount of foliage for someone to hide in if they were to. I can't see a thing!

"So you were told to do it by your leader then. If you value your life friend, you'll tell us who and where this leader is," Chrom said in an intimidating tone.

"W-What?! I can't tell you that! If I did, I'll be killed without a doubt!" The bandit answered Chrom.

"Look, if you merely cooperate, I can see about maybe pardoning some of your crimes. That'll only work if you cooperate and tell us where your leader is," Chrom told the bandit.

The bandit started to almost stop his shaking as he almost laughed and said, "Are all of you really this dense?! My leader is a mad man! You'd be insane to go against him!"

"Then we must be insane, but even if you don't tell us where your leader is; we will find him and put an end to him," Chrom said in response.

"W-Wait. Vincent, shine your light back that way," Robin told me as he pointed out in a direction.

I did as he said and shined my lantern's light to where he had pointed out as Chrom continued in his conversation with the thief.

"Hmph. Maybe you are all insane. Or maybe you're just plain dumb…" the bandit started to laugh quietly before he got louder and louder.

"What's so funny?!" Chrom asked the bandit seriously as he grabbed him by the cloak.

"You walked right into it! My leader's trap! You're all going to die!" The bandit yelled out as he continued his maniacal laughter.

Meanwhile, Robin and I had just focused our eyes in on a spot on the mountain. Just as the bandit shouted out that this was indeed a trap, another few bandits poked their heads out from behind a bush we had shined our light on. All of the bandits were holding bow and arrows.

"Everybody take cover!" Robin yelled as the bandits pulled back their bows and let arrows fly through the air.

Chrom had barely been able to catch Robin's words just in time as he tossed the bandit in his hands to the side and dived to a prone position to dodge the arrows sailing towards him. Others did the same or they simply took cover behind a nearby large rock. Sully and I, on the other hand, quickly moved our mounts and ourselves out of the line of danger before turning back to perhaps put up a fight if need be.

As I turned back around to give assistance, my lantern's light caught even more trouble. On the path further in front of us, bandits came charging towards us; each of them were letting out loud yells that spooked the local wildlife from its sleep. From the slope leading further down the mountain, bandits stammered up it as they quickly rushed towards those who had taken cover from the arrows coming from the top of the mountain.

It's a complete ambush! We've got no cover here!

"Shepherds," Chrom said as he got up from his prone position and dispatched an incoming bandit that intended on lobbing off his head off, "we're falling back! Quickly!"

Kellam, whom had been the only one to not take cover thanks to his large shield and armor, stood by his captain to help hopefully hold off the incoming bandits. Everyone else listened to what their leader told them to do and started to run back as fast as they could.

After the rest of those on foot had made it a safe distance away and the horde of bandits were closing in on them, Kellam and Chrom had started to double back as well with Robin providing some amount of cover for them. The entire time we ran back the way we came, volleys of arrows soared through the air. Either the same archers continued to take pot shots at us, or they had the mountain covered with them.

"Where's the bridge?!" Vaike asked as he took notice of the broken bridge we had crossed only moments ago.

"They must've broken it when we crossed!" Robin pointed out.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me," I said in an angry tone.

While the bandits closed in on us and we wondered what to immediately do, a loud explosion sounded out from the top of the mountain. When we all looked up, a large boulder had been knocked loose and was rolling straight for us.

"Move!" Chrom shouted as we got out of the boulder's path.

The large rock continued to go down the mountain and only finally stopped when it sounded like it smashed into something at the bottom of the mountain.

"Robin, we could use a plan!" Chrom told his tactician.

Just as he had managed to finish, an arrow whizzed directly into his leg. The thing pierced directly through his lower calf and made him fall over into a seated position.

Everyone was shocked to see their leader be injured, but thankfully Robin managed to keep his mind straight as he mustered up some kind of plan.

"Kellam, keep Chrom covered while Lissa heals him! I'll keep the archers under control! Everyone else, you've got a horde of bandits with your name on it!" Robin shouted out commands that we somehow managed to follow in this frantic situation.

There's so many of them though! There's no way we can handle this on our own! H-Hold on a second!

I looked dartingly around the area as I looked for the biggest amount of shrubbery in one area. I dismounted Choc and kept him close to me as the bandits were only a minute away now.

Oh, God. There's so much snow on this stuff. Will this even work?!

"Vince, what are ya doing?! It's time to fight not sightsee!" Vaike yelled to me as he took up the front of our little guard squad.

"I know what I'm doing alright?!" I shouted back in response to his yelling.

Ok, ok. This should do! Just shake off some of the snow. Please, please work.

I broke off some of the shrubbery in front of me and opened up my lantern to gain access to its fire. I carefully stuck the foliage in to get it lit by the fire without extinguishing the flame inside the lantern. After I managed to accomplish that, I planed the now burning greenery at the base of the large bush and tried to start a fire with it. The flame thankfully managed to catch on because of how green the plant was. It was, however, still only just a bush so the fire would be large and quick unlike a wood fire.

"There!" I shouted in joy at the sign of the growing fire.

The fire quickly illuminated our group and some of the surrounding as it continued to grow larger and larger.

"You gettin' cold or something!? This is no time to be makin' fires, Vince!" Vaike yelled back to me.

"A signal! Good thinking, Vincent! The others should see the light and it should help with fighting too!" Robin complimented me on my quick thinking.

If there's one thing I'm good at, it's making sure I have others around to bail me out from any trouble I get in. Thank you self-preservation!

"Hey, that actually is good thinking! Nice one, Viince!" Vaike also complimented me after he realized what I was doing wasn't useless.

As he complimented me, however, an arrow whizzed directly into his arm guard he had covering his off hand. It must've slightly pierced through the leather he had covering him as it didn't look pleasant to him. He, however, pulled the arrow out and tossed it to the side as some blood started to drip down his arm.

"Idiot! Don't just stand around! Only Kellam can do that!" I said in slight anger to him getting plucked by an archer so easily like that.

"Ah, no problem with this! Just a bit of a handicap for these poor guys! Can't have Ol' Teach goin' all out on them!" Vaike replied with a laugh before he butted axes with a bandit.

Another bandit was going to flank Vaike while his ally took care of him, but I darted forward and unsheathed my sword just in time to block the attack. With a quick deflection followed up by a stomp on the bandit's foot, the bandit didn't look pleased by my intrusion.

"You rotten-! I'll lob off your head and drink from your skull!" He shouted as he brought his axe up for a slice to my neck.

I ducked under the attack and stabbed him in the gut before muttering, "Yeah, no thanks."

Vaike finished off the bandit he was fighting as well with an axe swing directly into the other's neck. We looked to each other and grinned slightly at our small success.

Feeling spunky, I suppose, Sully charged forward on her horse as she narrowly dodged swipes from the bandits she rushed through. She took a stab at one of them as she rode past and left the guy lifeless on the ground. Her horse made a quick turn and she ran back through taking out another bandit the same way as she made it through the horde unscathed twice.

"That's how you take care of bandits," Sully said with a grin.

Both Vaike and I looked visibly upset by Sully outdoing us in our moment. Vaike went forward to take on another bandit as I went to follow behind. I stopped, however, when Choc had walked back over to me and nudged me slightly.

"What? You don't want to be left out of the fun?" I asked him and was responded to with a whinny.

"Alright, if you're feeling up to it, then let's get to it!" I said as I hoped quickly onto Choc.

With a quick snap of the reins and a little coaxing from me, Choc rushed towards the fray of bandits similar to how Sully's horse had performed. Speak of the devil, Sully had caught up to me and rode by my side.

As soon as I could, I took a swing for one of the bandits. I failed, however, when the bandit brought up a shield to block my attack. The wooden shield managed to withstand my charging blow with some difficulty. The recoil of my attack also made keeping my balance slightly harder than usual but I succeeded in keeping myself from falling.

Well, that bowled over terribly. Whoa! Arrows are flying at me now! Do they not care where they shoot!?

Arrows whizzed by my body as Choc and I ran through bandits that attempted to take any kind of quick swipe on us as we passed. I couldn't believe how crazy the archers were at the top of the mountain. If they shot for me, there was a chance they could hit their own allies. It seemed like bandits really were cutthroat.

As I neared the end of the pack of bandits, I took the chance to go for another swing on one of them. This time my swing met little resistance as it went clear through the bandit in one swoop. After accomplishing that, I turned Choc around to get on the way going back. Sully had made it through the group of bandits as well and seemed to have taken out some more as there was even more bodies lying around. Some of the bandits turned their attention towards the both of us and made it clear they weren't letting us charge back through.

In the meantime back near the main group, my fire seemed to be continuing well as it looked even larger than before. It didn't look good, however, when a **ball** of fire went soaring towards our group from behind and smashed into Robin's side. His cloak looked to be smoldering from the attack and I could assume his arm was burned.

They're attacking from behind as well?!

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Things were looking bleak for the group of Shepherds. They had split up into groups in hopes to capture what they thought was merely just a thief, but had instead been walking themselves into a full scale ambush.

Their worries doubled when they realized just how surrounded they were. They had a group of bandits blocking off their cavalry from returning while the rest of them continued on towards them. A group of archers had taken up residence near the top of the mountain as they volleyed arrows at whoever they could see. To make matters in even worse, a smaller group that seemed to have mages in it was approaching from the group's back.

Chrom had managed to get patched up quickly thanks to his sister's mending ways, but even with a skilled fighter like Chrom helping there was little hope.

"The mages! Kellam, Chrom, you have to take them out!" Robin said as his burnt arm was quickly healed by Lissa.

"Right!" Chrom replied as he went to rush and cover their backlines. Kellam went in front of his leader as he prepared to take any amount of spells with his shield.

One bandit from the small group flanking the shepherds from behind attempted to rush the marching Kellam. When he got within range, however, Kellam forced a quick thrust with his iron lance from behind his shield and pierced the bandit before he even knew what happened.

As the iron giant continued to push forward with Chrom taking cover behind him, he tossed a javelin he had on his back towards one of the mages. The javelin soared through the air and pierced one of the mages before he managed to cast another spell.

The other few mages, however, had cast off a spell that seemed to combine in midflight. The now giant fireball was flying straight for Kellam and Chrom. The latter managed to get out of the blast radius while the former simply had no choice in the matter. After the explosion settled, Kellam was barely standing.

"Kellam, are you alright?!" Chrom asked his soldier worriedly.

"I'll be… fine… Just don't forget… about me," Kellam said as he slowly got to a throwing position to lob another of his javelins. Similar to the last, it pierced another mage; only a couple of mages remain.

Three figures remained in the Shepherd's backline. Two of them were very clearly mages as they held their tomes at the ready; the final one, however, wore a blood red cloak and stood motionless in between the mages.

The last mages fired off another spell that made a smaller sized fireball than the last and it connected directly into Kellam's chest knocking the iron giant down for the count.

Furious at the sight of his comrade falling to the bandits, Chrom gritted his teeth as he charged on. He dodged a fireball by ducking closer to the ground and letting it soar over his head. His charge never faltered. Another fireball went towards him and he dodged it again with a quick sidestep during his sprint.

Finally, Chrom was within range of the mages. He wasted no time in sending them to their graves as he swiftly cut one down. The last mage attempted to draw a sword to retaliate, but was met with Chrom's blade in his gut. All while the individual in the blood cloak stood by and watched carefully.

Chrom had no intention in even taking the time to question the individual's reasoning for simply standing there. He retracted his sword from the bandit's gut and swung it quickly for the cloaked statue.

In what should've been a clean kill, ended in a clinging of blades. The man in the cloak had intercepted Chrom's attack with a short dagger he pulled out from his cloak. After deflecting Chrom's attack, the cloaked individual quickly hopped back.

"Not bad. I expected no less from the prince himself," the man said as he twirled his dagger around with one hand. His entire body was still completely cloaked still except for his right arm that he held his dagger in.

"I could care less what my enemy thinks of me. After what you've done to my comrades, I won't be letting you escape with your life," Chrom said as he put himself into a much more reserved battle stance.

"Hmph. I could say the same. I simply hope you'll make this easy on the both of us," the cloaked man uttered as he lowered the center of his body weight closer to the ground with his dagger ready to strike out.

Chrom took the first step to attack, but had to stop quickly to deflect knives the cloaked man threw out at him. The two knives flying for him were blocked thanks to his fast reflexes with his Falchion.

In the time of Chrom's confusion, the cloaked man rushed forward and swiped low for Chrom's gut. The Shepherd commander barely managed to stumble backwards out of range of the dagger threatening to kill him. As he stumbled backwards, the cloaked man continued in his assault sending more swipes with his dagger.

There was little time for Chrom to recover, but with a quick parry of the man's dagger he was able to go in for a riposte. The cloaked man, however, was able to react in time before Falchion pierced through him and sidestepped into Chrom's side. Chrom took notice of this and changed the swing of his sword to hit the bandit.

Instead of remaining in Chrom's side, the cloaked man elected to continue on and step further away from the prince's flank. In the short time he was moving by, he took out a couple of small round circular objects from his cloak and tossed them quickly towards Chrom's feet.

Chrom had taken notice of the foreign objects darting out of the man's cloak and put himself on guard for them. The objects, however, never met his body but instead impacted with the ground and combusted into a small explosion when they did.

The quick explosions made little to no damage only barely burning Chrom's shins but they knocked up enough smoke and debris for Chrom to momentarily lose sight on his enemy. When he finally had sight on him again, the cloaked man was rushing away from him. He was heading straight for the others that were dealing with the rest of the bandits. Dead in his sights was Lissa trying to stay out of harm's way.

"Lissa, no!" Chrom yelled as he busted into a full blown sprint.

It didn't take Chrom any time at all to catch up to the cloaked man. He caught up from behind and went for an attack as soon as he could. The bandit, however, seemed to be expecting it as he came to a full stop and dodged under the attack.

The man went for a grapple on Chrom but was met with a fist from the fumingly mad prince.

He recoiled from the strike against his jaw and found himself startled that he was even hurt. As he recovered from Chrom's vicious blow, he had little intention of letting him get away with it.

Just as the cloaked man went in to strike out against the ever ready Chrom, a voice echoed through the mountains as the sound of hooves coming towards them got louder and louder.

"Milord, hold on!" a familiar knight's voice echoed towards' them.

The new sound had the bandit worried.

"*Damnit. They weren't supposed to get here so quickly!"* the bandit thought to himself.

"Lower your blade and I promise you an easy death," Chrom said as he took note of the cloaked man's new composure.

"I'll politely decline," the bandit said as he backed up slowly from Chrom, "I haven't the will to lay down my life so easily."

He took out another small circular object from his cloak and held it in his free hand. Chrom had readied himself for the worst as he prepared for another explosion. Instead what happened was the cloaked bandit tossed the ball into the ground below him as it erupted into smoke.

The quick spreading smoke found its way into Chrom's lungs causing him to cough and close his eyes from the new substance. As he continued to try and recover from the smoke, a swift pain shocked through his body. A knife had pierced through his gut as the cloaked man held it there.

"I hope you resist this death as hard as you can. A slow and painful death will be all the better for your people to experience with you," the cloaked man silently whispered into Chrom's ear before he retracted his blade and fled.

Chrom clutched his new wound his gut as his coughs were now added with a bit of blood. He attempted to lash out against the bandit fleeing away from him, but in his daze his swing caused him to fall to the ground violently coughing.

In the meantime, the rest of the surviving bandits had stopped fighting when the numbers dipped into the Shepherds' favor. They retreated as quickly as they could with the Shepherd's ranged attackers knocking down anyone they could.

"Milord!" Frederick shouted as he saw his incapacitated leader lying helplessly on the ground.

Hastily, Frederick got off his horse and got down to treat Chrom's wound.

The others had taken notice in Chrom's incapacitation and regrouped to him when the bandits were completely run off. A few of the Shepherds came back with noticeable injuries still present as Lissa couldn't possibly heal them all especially not when Chrom was in such critical condition.

Vaike had come back with his entire left arm covered with blood from the initial arrow wound he had but hadn't had treated. Sully had gotten out of it with a slight cut on her leg one of the bandits managed to get on her while she constantly ran through them. Vincent came back to the group with an arrow in his side and had a difficult time keeping himself from ignoring the pain caused by it. Numerous members were injured and it had been a bad outcome for the Shepherds.

It made matters entirely worse when after Lissa had healed her brother he continued to violently cough.

"I-I don't get it! Work darn it!" Lissa said as she frantically casted more heals on her brother.

"It's just as I feared," Auden spoke up.

"Do you have any idea on what's going on?" Frederick asked.

"Yeah, I think I do. That blade was probably laced in poison and, by the looks of it, a potent one," Auden said with a grim expression.

"There has to be something we can do! Maybe Lissa just needs a different staff?" Vincent tried to suggest.

"Maybe, but to find that is like looking for a needle in the haystack. There's little chance we'll be able to in time," Auden replied.

"We can't just do nothing! My brother's going to die!" Lissa said with tears forming in her eyes as she held her brother's hand.

"I'm not-… I don't mean it like that. We just have very little options right now," Auden stated as he tried to explain to Lissa.

"Then what do you suggest we do?" Frederick asked Auden.

"We treat him to the best ability we can. The closest chance at civilization is Regna Ferox's border from here. Does anybody in your group know anything about poisons?" Auden asked everyone around.

"If it's something, Miriel probably knows it," Frederick stated.

"Then we could be in luck. Someone should go gather the others. The rest of us need to continue on as fast as we can," Auden said as he noticed the dying fire that had led them to the group's danger.

"I'll go and whip the others into gear. You guys get a move on," Sully said as she quickly took off ignoring the pain coming from her leg. Sully considered her injury as minor to the rest of her comrades. Also, she didn't want to be the one asking Lissa to heal her in this kind of moment.

"*Things couldn't get any worse could they?"* Vincent thought to himself as he silently cursed how bad things had gone.

A pretty easy chapter to write if you ask me. The only one that tops the simplicity charts for me was the first chapter and that one was a bucket of fun to write.

I'm hoping you guys enjoyed this chapter as most to all of it was completely original content.

I can't stress enough on how evenly matched Chrom was with the obvious bandit leader. The element of surprise was the only thing that managed to tip the tides of the fight.

So let me know how you guys enjoyed the chapter in a review. Anything I might've done wrong or good would be nice to hear.

Don't be afraid to ask any of your questions in a PM either.

Gonna keep on trying to work on these chapters so there isn't a long wait in between updates again. I'll try hard to keep myself motivated.

Chapter 8: Be Yourself

So, I would've had this chapter up yesterday but my brick of a bed finally did me in. My back ached so much that I actually couldn't even bend forward. It's still in slight pain now, but not nearly as much as before.

With my own problems out of the way now I'd like to say thanks to those that reviewed last chapter. Tis' always appreciated!

Anyways, here's a bit of on the shorter end chapter.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\WWWW\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Be Yourself

After the unexpected ambush in the mountains, the sun had barely started to rise over the horizon when, unluckily, a small snow storm kicked up as well. The temperature dropped substantially with time as some plants became so brittle they could be easily shattered with enough force. Slowly but surely the dead bodies of the bandits were being covered in a layer of white snow. Nature was throwing a blanket over them to make it look as though there was never any fight in the first place.

As the bodies were covered, a few wolves had gathered around a few of the bodies still visible to the naked eye. Gathering food was slightly difficult during this time of year for the wolves so the smell of fresh corpses was slightly tantalizing to them.

The wolves continued to circle around the bodies as they seemed to be choosing which would be better to take. Before they could make any kind of decision, however, their ears picked up something; footsteps coming towards them.

They immediately faced the direction the sound was coming from and exposed their teeth to this on comer. They snarled and even barked as a cloaked figure continued to approach.

At the sign of the wolves grouping up in front of him, the figure stopped dead in his tracks. The two parties had started a stare down between each other; neither of them gave an inch.

Electing to be the first to make a move, the wolves moved forward. Seeing this, the figure pulled out a small bomb out of his cloak and tossed it against the exposed side of a large rock nearby. He had thrown it with such force that it exploded against the side of the rock.

The bomb made such a loud noise that it startled the wolves. They turned their heads back to where the explosion occurred before they quickly started to run away from the vicinity; they had decided that it was too dangerous for them to be in.

"Damn wildlife. A man comes back to loot his dead soldier's bodies and he has to waste another stupid bomb," the man muttered as he put the extra bombs he held in his hand back into a pouch he had secured around his side.

The bandit leader marched over to one of the closest bodies near him and brushed off some of the snow to get a better look at whoever's face he was looking at. He examined the face of the person and quickly dismissed them as being useless.

"Killed all of my men and made the others run with their tails between their legs," the man continued to speak to no one in particular besides himself as he turned another body over to see whose corpse it was, "I knew they were all worthless from the start."

The bandit leader grunted in annoyance as he realized this corpse didn't have what he wanted either. He swiftly got up and walked over to another corpse. This time he decided to kick the body over to the other side with his foot before dusting off the snow on its face. Again, it was the wrong body.

"Job got partially done though. Can't not give them that. I would've preferred seeing that both of them died here with the rest of these idiots, but my poison should work its magic," he continued to ramble on as he reached down to inspect another body.

Finally, it had been the one he was looking for. He swiftly searched the body as his hands darted in and out of various

pockets the bandit had on him. Within a short span of time he managed to pull a map out of one of the pockets.

"*I'm never leaving a baboon in charge of the map ever again,"* the leader thought to himself as he looked over the map before pocketing it.

"And if it doesn't then I'll be sure to cut them down next time. I won't give up. No mistakes. I. Will. Not. Fail," the cloaked man clutched his dagger inside of his cloak as he slowly started to march away from the corpse ridden path and further towards the south.

Just before he could make it fully out of the area, however, a voice called out to him.

"Please… Please help me…" the voice sounded weak as it was evidently from one of the bodies lying about.

Apparently, this man had managed to survive his wound that knocked him down during the battle. He had a spear wound running directly into his gut. In the cold, it could take a bit before he bled out or even froze to death.

The cloaked man stopped in his tracks. Whether it was out of pity or curiosity, the man lying in the snow would never know.

Nevertheless, the dying bandit called out again, "Please… I need… help…"

The cloaked individual didn't respond. Instead, he stood firmly in his stopped position as the cold winds blew against his cloak. After a moment of silence exchanged between the two, the cloaked man cut off the wounded bandit before he could continue to beg.

"Begging won't do you any good. I'm not gonna help you," the cloaked man was as cold as the air around him.

"All you're doing is making noise and there happens to be some... individuals… out there that wouldn't mind a live meal," the cloaked man observed a pack of approaching wolves coming up the mountain. They seemed to be in search of a meal just like the last few were that got scared off.

"W-Wait!" the dying bandit tried to crawl away from the oncoming predators, "Please! I'll do anything!"

The cloaked individual started again in his walk as he chose to ignore the bandit's desperation.

The man's pleads of help echoed from within the mountains before being quickly drowned out by cries of agony.

"Then die… die like all the others," the bandit leader whispered quietly to himself as his words were carried off by the increasing snowstorm.

/\/\/\/\/\/\

After the unexpected ambush in the mountains, the rest of the Shepherds managed to regroup with us without wasting an extra lick of time. We were on locked rails to immediately go straight for Regna Ferox's border. The sun had finally broken over the horizon and a snowstorm emerged simultaneously as the clouds partially blocked out the sun. The temperature dropped substantially and almost all of us bundled up with whatever extra pieces of cloth we had.

We got Chrom up and placed him into the back of the wagon with all of our supplies. It wasn't hard to make a makeshift bed for him in there with Frederick's help.

His condition didn't seem to be getting any better, but thankfully Miriel whipped up a concoction for him in the blink of an eye and gave it to him. The drink knocked him out and she said it should make him feel better but it was still far from a cure.

I managed to get the arrow out of my side with some assistance from Vaike and a bit of healing with one of our last vulneraries. Never before did I think that I could experience so much pain in the blink of an eye. I thought maybe I would pass out from the arrow being pulled out of me.

Things seemed to be going to real crap around here. Everyone seemed to be walking in utter silence. Not even Choc looked visibly pleased at how things were turning out.

Lissa had secluded herself to her brother's side once we got him into the wagon. Miriel was there with her to monitor Chrom's condition, but she still didn't speak to anyone.

Everyone's mood had fallen to extreme lows with Sumia being almost unable to contain her sorrow.

All this from one event… One that shouldn't exist in the first place… Is it my fault?

I couldn't find my mood to be any better than the others. Constant questions riddled my mind from this incident. A man was dying in the back of a cart and it could very well be because of my existence here.

Fuck… Damnit! I didn't wish for this! Nobody would! I just… I can't… I can't handle this…

I gripped the side of my head with my free hand as it throbbed in pain. Lack of sleep, confusion, stress, anger; these things weighed on my head and it showed with my painful headache.

Just sleep… Sleep and you'll get away from this…

In a desperate attempt to escape what was occurring, I calmed myself as I closed my eyes. I just wanted to head back home and never experience this again.

No more.

"Vince!" a voice called out as I was shaken on top of Choc.

I opened my eyes slowly and saw Auden with his hand on my side. He seemed concerned with me.

"What is it, Auden?" I asked him.

He retracted his hand from my side as we continued to march with everyone else, "You were dozing off."

For good reasons.

"I'm just tired. That's all," I lied as I wiped my eyes.

"You and everyone else," Auden said with a small smile as we kept on our march.

How?

"How?" I blurted out what was on my mind.

"I'm sorry?" Auden replied in confusion as he turned his attention back to me.

"How can you be so… calm?"

"Am I really sticking out that much?" he shyly scratched the back of his head.

"Auden, Frederick won't even as much as glare at us for going off the path! Yeah, I'd say you stick out!"

"Everyone is looking pretty gloomy right now," he responded slightly seriously.

"Then why aren't you?!" I had started to get slightly more upset than I had wanted.

What is this?! Just water off his back to him?!

"I'm not unaffected by all this," he said as he locked eyes with my burning ones.

I looked in his eyes for a brief moment and I could tell he wasn't lying. After I realized this, I felt slightly ashamed that I almost snapped on him.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get so upset."

Auden shook his head a couple of times, "No, I'm sorry for making it look the way it did."

He rubbed his hands together and blew some air into them to keep them somewhat warm as he had been wearing no gloves. After repeating the process a couple of times he continued, "This is an army, Vince; a close one at that. It's to be expected that everyone would be down when their leader is in this kind of situation."

"Yeah, I know. It's just… nobody knows what to do," I blankly stared at Choc's mane as I brushed it with my hand.

"Nobody ever does, but that doesn't mean you should give up."

"…" I remained silent as I continued to listen to Auden.

"Don't let yourself be changed, Vince. Things will be rough but we all need to pull through this together if we're going to make it."

"Alright, Auden. I understand," I looked back to Auden with a faint smile.

"You're a bright kid, Vince. I'm sure you'll be fine," Auden said with a grin as he smacked my back causing me to almost topple over Choc.

"Boy am I glad you're finally smiling. You were starting to look like a dead raccoon!" Auden said joyfully.

"Racoon?! I was unaware gorillas knew how to speak," I shot back to the beard man with a mischievous grin.

"Gorilla? I'm not that hairy am I?" Auden asked as he scratched his beard.

I laughed quietly to myself at his concern for his facial hairs as our march went on.

"You're stature is large as well. I'd say only Kellam beats you in that-" I stopped suddenly as a thought rushed through my head.

"Kellam? I don't think I remember that name," Auden replied in confusion.

"Did we leave Kellam behind?!" I panicked and almost shouted.

"Um… I'm right behind you," a voice said from behind me.

"Crap!... Oh, Kellam it's you! Don't do that! You almost gave me a heart attack!" I said as I looked back to the giant behind me.

"Yeah, a lot of people tell me that," he stated with a blank face.

God, I thought they were over exaggerating his lack of presence. He really does seem to just pop out of thin air!

"Halt! Take another step and you'll be riddled with arrows!" a new commanding feminine voice yelled out in front of our group.

"We mean no trouble! The prince of Ylisse is in need of medical care!" Frederick took charge in being our negotiator.

"And I'm a little fairy that'll grant your every wish. What do you take me for?! A fool?!" the feminine voice shouted in response from atop a large wall that blocked our path.

It would appear that we made it to Regna Ferox's border after all. The thick wall seemed to stretch on for miles in both directions. It looked like they were taking care of it as well since there was no snow piled up on the tops of it even though snow continued to fall around us.

By the looks of the archers pointing there arrows directly at us, it would seem we were going to be forced into the third chapter's battle no matter what we said.

Can we even fight in this condition? Not even Vaike looks like he wants to and that's saying something!

"Turn around you filthy bandits! That is, if you even remotely value your life!" the voice continued to shout at us.

"As crazy as usual eh, Raimi?" Auden responded to the female decked out in large armor.

D-Does Auden know this chick?!

Everyone seemed slightly surprised at this. Frederick decided to let Auden speak in his place at the sudden realization.

"Oh? Am I supposed to think it amazing that you bandits know my name?!" the lady shouted back at Auden in slight anger.

"Yup, still crazy," Auden muttered under his breath in a sigh.

"What was that?!"

"Nothing… Look, Raimi. Can't you see that we aren't bandits?! We have a man that needs help!"

"I could care less what you say you have! The moment I let you in you'll all just slaughter me and my men!"

"Raimi, I didn't want to do this, but you're going to force me. Either let us in or I tell everyone here about your embarrassing birth mark," Auden looked up to the woman with a wide grin.

Raimi's face turned completely red as her jaw hung open.

"H-How w-would y-you-?! Auden!?"

"The one and only extraordinaire adventurer!" Auden spread his arms wide as if he was on display.

"If you tell a soul about my birth mark, I'll kill you!" Raimi slammed a fist down into the wall she was supposed to be guarding and broke a piece of it. The chunk of wall fell down and into a pile of snow.

"And if I don't, you'll still kill me! You're really giving a man little options here."

A brief moment of silence broke out between our two groups as Raimi seemed to be contemplating ideas.

"O-Open the gates," Raimi commanded one of her soldiers as she walked away from the side of the wall.

We stood patiently in the blistering cold as we waited to be allowed in.

In the meantime, I lowered my head next to Auden's and whispered into his ear, "You know this psycho chick?"

"You could say, yes," he whispered back as he stood in the cold snow.

After a short wait, Raimi and a small squadron of soldiers walked out from the other side of the gate. Raimi was at the head of the group as she led it towards ours. She stopped shortly in front of Auden who had taken up the head of our group.

She stood mere inches away from the beard man. Her height was a bit shorter than Auden's but Auden was a tall man. Her armor, however, made her look like she was practically as wide as him.

Raimi eyed Auden intensely as the other merely grinned. After a quick inspection made by Raimi, she jabbed Auden directly in the gut sending him to his knees. While I was shocked and motionless, everyone else drew their weapons as though a battle was going to break out.

"Why'd you have to go and open your big mouth about my birth mark!? Now everyone's gonna want to know!" Raimi yelled at the injured Auden which made everyone that drew their weapons feel confused.

"Hello to you too," Auden barely managed to say while still smiling.

Raimi sighed before she offered her hand to Auden to help him up, "Come on get up now."

The lack of Raimi outright murdering Auden made those that had their weapons drawn slowly put them back as they slowly realized they shouldn't have in the first place.

Come on guys. Even I could tell that was an affectionate punch.

"You could've just told me who you were and I would've let you in," Raimi said after getting Auden to his feet.

"We told you we had the prince of Ylisse and you didn't let us in! How would I know?!"

"That's because we have a lot of Plegian bandits coming around pretending to be him!"

"Really?"

"Plegian bandits are disguising themselves as milord?" Frederick joined in on the conversation.

Raimi nodded in confirmation as she continued to explain, "Yeah, we get them every couple of weeks trying to pose as your prince and the rest of your guy's Shepherds. I'll tell you, it's quite amusing seeing the bandits try to lay dress up."

She chuckled lightly as she finished explaining before she stopped and got serious again.

"So you say the prince needs help? If I may ask, what seems to be the problem?"

"Milord is poisoned. We could use any kind of help you could spare," Frederick pleaded.

"Also, we had come here in the first place to discuss if Regna Ferox could lend any of their troops to Ylisse," Robin

added in as he remembered why we decided to march all the way here at all.

"I'd love to help you all, but that's not my decision. It's up to the khans. I'll take you to the capital immediately, however, and arrange a meeting."

"W-What of milord?! He's in critical condition! He needs help now!" Frederick shouted to Raimi as he lost part of his calm demeanor in the process.

"We'll tend to him to the best we can for now. You, go fetch one of our medical troops that can handle poison," Raimi directed one of her soldiers that bolted off as fast as his feet could carry him. A troop adorned in the same exact armor as the other returned in his place in a matter of minutes. The only thing different about his armor was that he had a red plus on the back of his armor. He also carried in his hands a bag that probably had all of his supplies in it.

So distinguishing…

Frederick led the medical troop without a moment's delay into the back of the cart that was steadily getting cramped with the number of people and objects it had in it. Hopefully he and Miriel can figure out something fast.

/\/\/\/\/\/\

Raimi guided our party through the border's gates and lead us onto the path towards the capital. It took a good half of the day to make it there with our quick pace. The capital was supposedly called Bellator.

The city wasn't much for being called a capital. It seemed more attuned to the common man unlike Ylisse that seemed accustomed to all levels of wealth.

I suppose lavishing houses isn't the thing a nation of warriors would be interested in.

Fights almost seemed to be some kind of national sport here. If you looked hard enough for them, you'd find one in no time. They were all in seemingly good fun, however, as the crowd and the combatants seemed to be enjoying themselves.

The one distinguishing thing in the city would have to be the castle in the middle of it all. The castle seemed to keep things very basic. It didn't look terribly pleasing to the eye because it seemed to look like they had only put it up just for the fun of it. None of the walls were decorated, and there were visible cracks on the sides of it. It looked as battle hardened as some of the soldiers around here.

Definitely not going for style points with that.

We entered into the castle and we were first escorted to a room for Chrom. Surprisingly the interior was actually decorated quite nicely with purple and dark blue decorations. Curtains of the mentioned colors were draped over windows fashionably and there was an array of different weapons scattered about in display cases. Chrom's room had a battle axe that was being held in a case against the wall on the opposite side of his bed. There was a plaque at the bottom of it that seemed to tell a brief history of the weapon.

The third West Khan's axe. His weapon was said to never gain rust no matter how much wear was put on its blade. It was recovered near the capital after the first civil war.

I stopped reading the plaque and looked up at the weapon held in the display case.

A khan's weapon huh? Looks practically brand new. Guess they might not be lying about the never rust thing.

"Easy… Easy… Watch his head… There!" The medical soldier looked relieved as a couple of soldiers helped him place Chrom gently onto the bed in the room.

"Thank you. That'll be all," he waved off the extra soldiers and they exited the room only to take up guard at the front of it.

The rest of the people in the room included Lissa, Sumia, Frederick, Robin, Miriel, Sully, and Vaike. The others had gone to take care of storing our supplies and animals in the castle. Auden, however, went with Raimi to get one of the khans to hopefully speak to us.

Ten people were in this large room including Chrom and myself. All of which were concerned with Chrom's wellbeing.

Lissa and Sumia had taken up chairs next to Chrom's bed almost as soon as he was lay down. Lissa held her brother's hand in her own two hands. It was a way of giving comfort to both her and her brother. Sumia, on the other hand, simply

looked on at her captain; sadness built up in her eyes.

Miriel had already gotten to work on setting up a personal work station on one of the empty tables in the room. I presume the table is usually used for things like morning meals or a game of chess, but now it was being turned into an alchemy lab of sorts.

The rest of us stood by and looked on as the scene unfolded around us. That is, until Frederick broke the silence.

"How is milord going to fare? Will he be alright?" Frederick seemed to be directing his question at the medical soldier and not Miriel.

The medical soldier took a long deep breath as he prepared himself. He took off one of his gloves that he had been wearing for sanitary reasons I'd presume and placed the back of his hand on Chrom's forehead.

"Judging by the fever. It doesn't look well," he replied as he took his hand back and placed his glove back on.

A few in the room bit their lips out of anger while others fought back hard to keep in tears. Some in the room remained like a statue as they tried to not show any weakness to the others in the room in this strenuous time.

"B-But you can help him, right?!" Robin was the next to ask.

"Certainly I can. Whether or not it saves him I cannot guarantee, however. It's a game of luck at this point." This statement from the medical officer plummeted everyone's moods even further down.

"I'll give you all a moment," the medical soldier walked slowly towards the door before closing it behind him.

Lissa was the first to break with tears finally leaving her welled up eyes. She clutched her brother's hand in her own tighter than before as she let herself finally give in to her sorrow.

"Why… Why do you always have to be so reckless? If you leave now, how will Emm and I make it?" She continued to hold onto her brother's hand as her tears fell onto the bed he was rested on.

"Chrom… Why is this happening?" Sumia muttered to herself as she clutched her hands to help her in not breaking down into tears.

This is just… I can't…

I was the next to perform an action. I walked myself over and laid myself down across the extra space on the foot of Chrom's bed. With both of my hands, I covered my face.

"Miriel, how goes your work?" Robin asked the mage that was still working hard on her experiments.

"I'm formulating a list of ingredients for my next preparation. The only difficult part is procuring the necessary ingredients. They aren't sold around here and the only other way of obtaining them quickly is to gather them ourselves," She explained.

"Do you know where they are?" Robin asked another question.

"Yes, spread very far apart from our current location."

The resulting silence was an obvious sign of the lack of pleasure in Miriel's statement. Not a single word was uttered again.

Damnit, Vincent! Just do something!

In a speedy burst, I raised myself up to a seating position as I pulled the sides of my mouth to make some kind of strange face. It was a desperate attempt to liven the mood, but I was only being met with bizarre looks. I was slowly unstretching my face when I realized this until a fist connected with my nose. The fist belonged to a much armored Sully.

The resulting blow knocked me back onto the bed as I clutched my nose in pain.

And thus I caused one of the things I wanted to avoid. Whatever… Nothing you can do about it now.

"The hell are you doing you clown?! This isn't any time for jokes!" Sully yelled angrily.

"Alright, I probably deserved that," I muttered as I clutched my nose to prevent some of the pain welling up in it.

"You're damn right you did!"

"Then punch me again," I stated as I dropped my hand holding my nose which caused the blood welling up in it to trail down my face.

"Oh?" Sully looked like she was going to enjoy punching me again. A sight that I enjoyed seeing surprisingly.

"Vince, you got some sort of death wish? Even the Vaike isn't that dumb." Vaike said from behind Sully as she approached me cracking her knuckles with a smile.

As she got within range to deliver her blow, I merely smiled as I prepared myself for the worst feeling face I've ever had. She reeled her arm far back and then quickly rocketed it forward as it connected directly with my face.

This second blow didn't merely knock me onto my back this time. Instead, it caused me to topple directly off of the bed as I rolled backwards. My head was the first to hit the ground as I continued for another roll. I gripped the back of my head after the rolls had ended as it felt like it was busted from the fall against the floor.

"Huh… Didn't think you'd still be up," Sully said as she looked over the bed to the slightly incapacitated me.

"Ahhh… Mommy?" I asked in a daze as I could feel there was clearly blood at the back of my head.

"V-Vincent! Sully, you're going to kill him!" Lissa said in worry.

"Stop this nonsense at once!" Frederick said as he glared daggers at both Sully and I.

"Hey, he asked for it," Sully shrugged.

Lissa hastily got up from her seat and grabbed ahold of her staff she had brought into the castle with her. She casted a heal onto the fractured head of mine causing the bleeding to cease. It didn't do much for the pain, however.

"Chalk that up as a third…" I muttered to Lissa before getting up to my feet. It was difficult what with the ringing still going on in my head but I managed.

"H-Huh?" Lissa tried to understand what I said.

"Explain yourself immediately, Vincent! You're making a mockery of Chrom's condition!" Frederick stated as he pointed a finger accusingly towards me.

"You're kind of proving why right now," I said as I pointed back in a less judgmental way.

"I… I don't quite understand what you mean," Frederick said as he looked himself over.

"Sully gets it! Punch me again, Sully!" I said as I motioned my hand for Sully to come over.

"With pleasure," She replied with a grin.

"W-Wait! On second thought, please don't! I take it back! Not the face!" I desperately pleaded to sully as I held up my hands in defense.

"Oh, don't be such a wuss," Sully said before jabbing me swiftly in the gut causing the wind to be knocked right out of me.

"I don't think any of us still understand, Vincent," Robin replied as he sweat dropped at the injured me.

"I… let me… catch my breath…" I barely managed to respond while I clutched my gut.

"Oh! Ol' Teach gets it! It's a competition to see who has the most endurance! Come on! Someone punch the Vaike!" Vaike exclaimed as he stood triumphantly. He had completely misread the situation in front of him.

Within the matter of a millisecond multiple fists connected with Vaike's face. The swift blows knocked Vaike completely unconscious as his face barely held onto its previous expression of joy.

"Frederick? Did you hit Vaike too?" Robin asked the great knight that stood as calmly as he usually did.

"As Sully might say, he asked for it," Frederick stated plainly.

Sully let out a laugh as she patted the great knight on the back of his armor, "That's exactly how I would've put it! Nice one, Freddy!"

"S-Sumia!? You too!?" Robin asked shockingly as he noticed the Pegasus knight shaking her hand out of what seemed to be pain.

"I-I'm sorry! It was an accident! I tripped and well…" Sumia tried to shyly explain what she had done.

"There! Don't you get it now!? You guys are finally acting more like yourselves again! No more moping around Shepherds! Do you really think Chrom would want us acting like he's already dead?!" I paused for a moment to see if anyone would respond.

When nobody did speak up I continued, "The answer's no! We shouldn't be standing around here like a bunch of statues! Let's go out and get those ingredients for Miriel and save our Captain!"

The group of Shepherds in the room remained silent after my speech. I had expected a loud and responsive cheering for all that I had just said.

It's quiet… Argh! It's so unnerving! I hate being a public speaker!

"Hate to say it, but I think the new recruit might be a better soldier than the rest of us," Sully said to the others.

"If there's one thing a knight must do, it's to protect the royal family at all costs! I will assist you in saving milord!" Frederick said as he planted a fist into his chest as if he was somehow saluting me.

"I could never let the man that found me in that field die. I'll help out too!" Robin said as he stood beside Frederick.

"If it's for my brother, I'll do anything! Count me in!" Lissa replied joyfully with her staff at the ready.

"I-I'll help save the Captain too!" Sumia said shyly from the back of the group.

"Hey, after taking three hits from me, I'll lend ya a hand. This one's gonna help too whether he likes it or not," sully approached the line of others while she dragged Vaike in his unconscious form.

"Not a bad rally. I may have to delve into your cranium to see what made it so compelling after this is all done," Miriel said from her experimenting station.

I sighed in relief to see them finally getting themselves out of the holes they were all in. They had gotten back to what made them the Shepherds in the first place.

"Alright, then we won't waste any time!" I shouted in joy.

"My, my. That was quite the display! I found it hard to not jump in on some parts myself!" a new voice spoke up from the doorway to the room.

All eyes in the room turned towards the doorway and were greeted by a smiling tan woman. She had blonde hair being held back and was wearing well decorated white and red armor. She was the East Khan Flavia.

"Excuse me, but who might you be?" Frederick asked Flavia.

"I am the East Khan Flavia and it is most definitely my pleasure to get to know you all," She entered into the room while extending a hand to me.

U-Um… Excuse me?

I blankly stared at the woman in front of me that was grinning while she held out her hand. Without much going on in my head at the time, I merely reached out and shook it.

"I take it you're the leader of this army? That was quite the thrashing you took!" She laughed as she released my hand from her painfully hard grip.

So strong…

"D-Do beg my pardon East Khan." Frederick stammered.

"Hm?" The Khan turned her attention to the great knight.

"T-that one isn't our leader. Actually he is," Frederick pointed towards Chrom.

"Ah! I apologize for my ignorance. Well, if you don't mind since your leader seems to be out, I'd like to speak with this one. He seems like he can understand the Feroxi way." She grinned to me as she jabbed me in my chest.

Ow…

"So? What's your name? What's the matter? Talk all you could already?" Flavia asked the ever silent me.

"I-it's Vincent," I somehow managed to respond.

"Well, Vincent, let's get straight to business."

Why the fuck do I have to be the speaker?!

So that's that for the chapter.

I'm hoping I've got a good reel on your guy's attention.

Let me know if I made any mistakes or if I'm doing well by dropping it in a review! Or just simply leave your thoughts about the chapter in one. That's what they're for!

Don't be afraid to also shoot me a PM if you have any ideas or questions. I'm always open to respond if you have any.

Now, if you all don't mind, I'll be grabbing a heating pad for my back. I can't stand this pain any longer. Here's to me looking old while I sit around!

Chapter 9: Speak to Me

Apologies on the slight delay. Something happened in my personal life that upset me quite a bit, but I got over that in a couple of days so no big deal there.

Thank you once again to everyone reviewing! I read them all and appreciate them a lot!

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Speak to Me

"So I was informed you all came here to see if you get support from Regna Ferox's troops. Is this true?" Flavia inquired the still blank faced me.

"Well? Hey, how hard did ya hit this guy?" Flavia asked Sully whom was standing to the sides of our conversation.

"Pretty hard," Sully said with a smirk.

Don't remind me…

"Ugh… Perhaps I should let you all rest and we can continue this tomorrow," Flavia said with a groan.

"W-Wait! You just-!" I stopped myself as I let out a deep breath I was holding in the entire time.

"Sorry, you just caught me off guard is all," I replied as I stopped mindlessly staring.

"It would appear so," Flavia frowned.

"B-But you were right. About why we came here in the first place. You see, Chrom was hoping that Regna Ferox could spare some of its troops to assist Ylisse."

"Sorry, no can do."

Yeah, saw that coming.

"W-What?!" Everyone in the room shouted in shock and I joined in as well to not look out of place.

"I said no! What?! Are you all deaf?!" Flavia shouted back in response proving the khans have no understanding of the word civility.

"F-Flavia, is there really no way that you can spare ANY troops for us?!" I pleaded with the khan.

Flavia's anger settled as she then smirked to my question.

"Well, that's what we're here to do business for isn't it?"

"I suppose it is," I replied already knowing what she was getting at.

"See the way things work around here is different then you all might understand. There have always been two khans that rule over Regna Ferox. One of those khans, however, has complete and total authority over the other."

"Doesn't that make having two rulers, I don't know, pointless?"

"It's how our culture stands. One khan shows that they are the stronger of the two and that goes a long way in our people's hearts. Even if the other didn't have total power over the other, the people would only listen to the stronger one anyways." Flaiva started to walk towards the window in the room before peering out of it by moving the curtains with her hand.

"So then let me guess, you're the one out of power."

"Exactly, but you're in luck. You see, we have a competition every once in a while to determine who is the ruling khan. We khans choose our champion and those champions choose four others. It's customary for khans to choose outsiders to prevent any kind of blood feuds between our people." She then turned away from the window with a wide grin.

That sounds a bit different from the game. Then again nothing is really like the game at this point. I shouldn't expect much less.

"So you want to pick one of us and then what? We do some kind of battle royale?" I asked as Flavia walked back to a standing position of only a few feet in front of me.

"You're right on the dot there, Vince. The battle, however, is more akin to a tourney, on the other hand. I have, however, decided that if you help me win this competition then I promise you to give Regna Ferox's full support."

"So how about it? I request that you, Vincent, be my champion," Flavia finished as she extended her hand for another handshake.

Huh?

"I'm sorry. Could you repeat that? My hearing might be damaged," I said as I cupped a hand around one of my ears.

"I said that I want you as my champion!" Flavia yelled directly into my ear drums. I was certain she had popped them with her voice.

I recoiled back from the sound, but I recovered and knew exactly what she had said.

The crazy chick wants me to fight for her! I'll lose if I fight! She's putting her money on a losing horse!

I stood there motionless until I eventually had become a knockoff statue of the Thinker. I wanted to weigh my options in this situation since I knew if I messed up it would cost us all big.

"Vincent, what in Naga's name are you doing?! You must accept this offer for milord!" Frederick said causing me to be busted from my thoughts.

"I'm thinking over here, Frederick! This is a lot for me to decide on!" I shot back to the great knight.

"If you don't say yes, you'll wish you had," Frederick stated while glaring at me.

I've got enough to worry about Frederick! Leave me alone!

"U-Uh… Can someone else take my place?" I asked Flavia.

"I've already decided on you as my champion. You still can pick four of your friends here as your allies. If I were you, I'd definitely pick the red head knight over there," Flavia said as she directed my attention to Sully who was giving me a thumb up while grinning.

That still means I'm responsible for fighting someone!

"W-Wait. Can't I just ask the other khan if they'll help us? Why do I have to go through a tournament?!" I asked what had been my final idea.

"You don't think Raimi and Auden didn't get both of us? That man could care less about what you want unless you beat his champion! Either way you're in for a fight." Flavia pointed out.

As I had trouble bringing myself to accept the hopelessness of my situation, Lissa crouched down next to me.

"You might want to just say yes, Frederick's already making a list of punishments if you don't," she whispered silently into my ear.

"Ok… I… I acce… I acce…." I had trouble finishing my acceptance. No matter what I tried, I couldn't say two simple words.

Suddenly, Lissa smacked my back causing me to cough both of the words out at once, "I accept!"

I rubbed my back in displeasure as I glared at Lissa whom simply shrugged in response as she smiled.

"Great! In that case, the tournament is in five days. Choose your allies and get ready. I heard the West Khan found a new champion that was even stronger than his last undefeated one," Flavia said as she walked towards the door leading out of the room.

"You, lead them all to their rooms when they're ready," Flavia instructed one of the guards standing at Chrom's door.

"Y-Yes, ma'am!"

The door creakily shut behind her and the room was left in utter silence. We all stared at each other for what felt like a solid minute.

"Sully, you're in the team!" I ceased the silence as I quickly put Sully on my team of champions like Flavia suggested.

"Whoa, slow down there. You should at least treat a girl to a meal first," Sully said with a smirk.

"Umm… Three others… Robin you're in!" I said as I dragged the surprised tactician over to my side of the room.

"Vincent, are you sure about this?" Robin asked skeptically.

"Yeah, I'm sure! Now… could you pick the other two?" I asked with my hands clasped together.

Half of the room face palmed at how I couldn't manage to make the team on my own.

"Hmm… Well, we'll definitely need our strongest fighter. Fredrick, you're in!" Robin said pointing to the great knight.

"I'll do milord proud," Frederick responded with determination.

"And if we want to round things out… Vaike would be the last one," Robin pointed out to me.

"Huh?... Is someone… calling for the Vaike!?" Vaike barely managed to pull himself up thanks to the bed as he still seemed to be in a daze.

We all looked at the bruised up Vaike trying to hold himself up with the support of the bed. He smiled to us all even though it looked evidently painful and shouted, "Nobody leaves the Vaike out!"

He then promptly fell back down to the floor as he couldn't hold himself up even with the bed's help anymore.

"Lissa, can you help Vaike?" I asked the healer.

She sighed before she picked up her staff and muttered to no one in particular, "If I don't, who will?"

While Lissa healed Vaike and shook him awake, I decided it would be best if we got our planning out of the way.

"So we have five days to train and all, but how long will it take to grab Miriel's ingredients?" I asked the ones who might know. In other words, the two smartest ones in our group being Miriel and Robin.

"I'm not sure. Miriel, do you have a map for this?" Robin asked the mage.

Without even uttering a word as she was fixated on her reading, she handed a rolled up map to Robin. There was three very specific red Xs scattered across the map. The red Xs were numbered from one to three. At the bottom of the map was an index of sorts. Each of the numbered Xs was given an explanation for what the item's name was, what it looked like, and what it was. Miriel was very descriptive in her explaining so that even I could make out what she was talking about.

"This is… Yeah, no doubt about it. It'll take us all five days to get these together. That's if we don't have trouble finding these things," Robin stated in disappointment before handing the map over to me.

I looked over the map and if the distances on here can tell me anything it's that Robin was right. Going to each mark would take us almost an entire day and then we'd have to quickly find the ingredient before heading back as soon as we did.

"Can't we maybe save some time? Maybe we could go from one to another and hit them up all at once?" I suggested what came to my head.

"The pathways I outlined are the best guarantee at getting there promptly. If you take any other route, you run the jeopardy of hitting some kind of hindrance. There's no possibility you can go through them all at once," Miriel replied as it turned out she was listening to us converse the entire time while she read from her book.

Geez… She's crazy good at what she does!

"No, that's it!" Robin exclaimed in a eureka style moment.

He reached out to take the map from me and I complied allowing the ecstatic tactician have his way. He pointed down to the map as he explained, "If we slit up into three groups, we can get this done in no time flat!"

Wow. Why didn't I think of that?

"Well in that case, I think I'll let you handle the splitting of the groups. I am exhausted," I stretched my arms up above my head as I wandered towards the door while yawning.

"Wake me up when my group's about to leave, alright?" I told the others before asking the guard outside the room to show me to my own.

He took me to what was designated as my room and I have to say, it is the most unflattering room I've ever seen.

Even the one I got back at the Shepherd's HQ was better than this!

The guard closed the door behind me as he left me in my small room. It was starkly contrasting to Chrom's room he had been placed in; mine felt like a prison cell.

Whatever. A bed's a bed at this point. I haven't slept for two days and I think I'm starting to feel it.

My first action in my temporary new room was a quick stretch followed by me sitting myself down on the somewhat uncomfortable bed. I unstrapped my sword's sheathe from my side and laid it next to my bed side for easy access.

It'll be nice to go back home for a little while. I'd probably flip out if I couldn't. At least my torture seems slightly sedated in comparison to what it could be.

During my thoughts, I sprawled myself out across my bed and closed my eyes for rest.

Still, I'll figure out what's going on. No way am I letting whoever's getting there sick kicks out of this get away Scot-free.

It didn't take long for me to start feeling my mind drift off. I was extremely exhausted and embraced sleeps encroach on me. With my ability to concentrate dwindling, I drifted off into slumber.

/\/\/\/\/\/\

I awoke groggily to light leaking into my room. For the first few minutes of waking up, I really didn't want to move at all. I had finally gotten sleep after almost forty eight hours of being awake. The first thing I didn't want to do was leave my bed.

Slowly, however, I did will myself to awaken fully. I raised myself out of my bed and placed my feet onto the floor while rubbing my eyes. When I finally got the sleep out of my eyes, I opened them fully.

Home again.

Once again, I completed the cycle of seemingly traversing between worlds during my sleep. It's not something I enjoy in the first place but I do enjoy the return. A break between the insanity is something I need.

There was, however, the demon of a machine that still kept my home feeling off. That very same demon being my 3ds that I'm beginning to regret ordering off Amazon in the first place.

Damn online stores. I knew all their convenience was bad somehow.

Either way, I think for now I'll simply ignore it. Whether or not the devil knows it yet, but I have a plan for it.

For now, though, I'm going to take my time back home slowly. I don't want to do anything crazy before I enjoy all the things I have to my access here.

I got up slowly from my bed and was quickly thrown back onto it when I felt how much pain my body was in.

Holy-! I definitely got messed up that's for sure. Man, my face is killing me. What the hell was I thinking getting punched by Sully!? I was given ample warning by what she did to Virion!

I laid on my bed almost motionless as I didn't want to move again and experience anymore pain, but eventually I managed to get up and start my day in the real world.

My day consisted of me enjoying all the simple basic pleasures that I believe now we really do take for granted. You know that saying, "You don't know you have a good thing until it's gone."

Well, I know how true that really is now. Good well prepared food, basic accommodations, little responsibility, all these things and more I've been taking for granted until now.

If anything, this game stuff is just teaching me to be a more appreciative person. God, don't tell me that's why I'm being forced to do this. I'll start hating everything on purpose if it is!

I thanked my mom today for practically everything she did. IT put her off a little, but she looked happy because of it. Also, I let my dad know that I really do respect all the hard work he was doing for us. He comically asked me if I wanted anything to which I told him no.

I don't want to leave them again without them knowing how much I love them…

After the sun had set and I finished dinner with my family, everyone retired off to bed. I went up to my room as well but with a different idea than to sleep. In my hand I held what I felt would defeat the demon on my desk.

I've got you now you Nintendo shit!

I opened the door to my room almost dramatically. Quickly, I closed the door behind me. I locked my focus onto my 3ds and approached it. Without a second thought, I opened it up and turned it on like it planned for me to do like all the other times before now. This time, however, I knew how to beat its game.

It started to show me the events that had transpired in the last two days of my life. As soon as things started to seem strange, however, I pulled up the ace in my hand.

A video camera!

I'll show everyone that this thing is a devil and that I'm not crazy!

I flipped the camera open and turned it on while the device in front of me continued to play out its movie of dread. I looked through the device and what I saw was shocking.

T-There's nothing on the screens!

The screens on my 3ds were completely blank when I looked through the video camera. It was as though I hadn't turned on the device at all.

Ok… That's not normal. W-Wait! This is my chance! I'll show someone this!

I didn't waste a moment. My mind completely disregarded anything my device was trying to show me as it instead pushed me to go grab someone in the house to see what I had saw. I reached for my door and opened it.

Instead of seeing the rest of my house outside of my door, I saw nothing but white. I had to stop myself from continuing in my run out of my room in order not to step into the completely void of anything area.

"W-What the fuck!?" I yelled out as my heart started to kick itself into overdrive.

I was starting to panic. There was no possible way for what I was currently experiencing to be normal. I must be going insane. If I had to bet, I would bet that I was currently strapped up in a straitjacket in an insane asylum that I was losing my mind in.

I probably lost my mind a long time ago… Either that or this is all a dream… Please… Please be a terrible dream.

While I prayed for my sanity at my door, a voice called out.

"Hello?" the seemingly male voice called out as if he was just answering the phone.

I perked my head up from its downward position it had taken to look around my room for the voice. The only place I thought it could come from was my 3ds.

I steeled myself to move toward the device and see what was going on. When I got within visible range of the screens on my handheld console, I could see that there was a cartoonish man on it. His body was taking up both the screens and he looked like he was tapping on the top one as he looked directly at it.

He was wearing a completely black suit as he held a golden cane in one of his hands. For headwear he wore a fedora on top of his head to complete his outfit. His hair was bright green which helped reinforce his look of a cartoon.

"Who the hell are you?" I asked in a disinterested tone.

"*I'm the jackass that put you in that game!" I'm calling it now.*

"O-Oh! There you are! Ah, would you mind giving me a hand?" the man in my 3ds asked as he extended his free hand to me.

Does he think I can grab him?! He's in my fucking game- Oh whatever! I've seen enough crazy stuff already…

I dropped the camera in my hand to my 3ds and held out my own to assist him somehow. Surprisingly, his hand actually came out of my 3ds and grabbed onto mine. I half expected him to say, "You're mine now!" or something along those lines. Instead, however, I actually did end up pulling him up as his body came out of my 3ds.

About halfway into my pull, however, "Um… I seem to be stuck," the green haired man got stuck sticking halfway out of my 3ds.

"How'd you expect to fit through this crap in the first place?!" I asked as I tried to pull harder.

He laughed in response, "Well, I thought this would be a bit funnier for the both of us. Doors are for the dull!"

You damn… I don't think a workout is funny at all!

With all my strength put into one final pull, I managed to get the suited up man out of my 3ds. I, on the other hand, with the amount of force I put into my last pull I went flying into my dresser that was directly across from my desk.

I rubbed the back of my head from the pain that had started to swell up in it. When it started to die down, I saw the man in the suit dusting himself off with his hands. I will admit he loks less cartoony outside of my console than he did in it, but that doesn't mean I don't think he still is one.

The man noticed me looking at him on the ground and gave me a cheeky grin.

"Top o' the mornin' to ya!" he said with a quick wave of his hand as he leaned in for a bow.

"You know, it was night out before all this," I said pointing out that it was well past the morning.

"Ah, well… top o' the night to ya!" he said as he repeated what he had just did two seconds ago.

I sighed at his actions as I rubbed my forehead for the aneurisms I know I'll be having. After a bit of preparation for it, I managed to ask, "So… are you God or something?"

"Me? Oh, please! Don't give me all that credit! I'm more like…" he waved off my question before he placed a finger to his chin as if he had entered deep thought.

He snapped his fingers before he continued, "I'm more like the security guard!"

"The security guard…" I deadpanned.

"Yeah, yeah! You know, they guard a place to monitor who goes in and out of it! I'm like the security guard of the universe… Oh, sorry! Universes!" The man in front of me tried explaining I suppose his job occupation to me.

Only half of his sentence to me was remotely interesting. The other half was simply parent talk like from Charlie Brown.

"And why is the "security guard of universes" in my room and fucking with me!?" I put heavy emphasis on the last couple of words I yelled to him as I got up to a standing position.

The green haired man put up his hands in defense as though I was going to lunge forward and hit him. When he realized that I wasn't, he dropped his guard and straightened out his suit again.

"Well, I simply figured maybe now would be a good time to talk to you. Especially since you seem to be trying to expose all my hard work."

I crossed my arms to lower my desire to actually attack the man in front of me, "Yeah, I wonder why I would want to do that… What do you want?"

"You see, I've been watching you and you seem a bit… on edge. I merely wanted to come here and try to show that I'm a friend and not an enemy," the green haired man opened his arms wide still holding his cane in his right hand and tried

to give me a hug.

I extended one of my own hands forward and kept him from accomplishing his hug, "No, I mean, why the hell are you putting me through this shit?"

"One," the green haired man said as he stopped his hug attempt and held his index finger in front of me.

"Huh?"

"I'm going to allow you three questions from this point on. I'll answer them truthfully but I might not answer hem fully. Choose your questions carefully," the suited up man backed away from me and took a seat in my computer chair at my desk.

"The hell? Is this just a game to you?!"

"Two."

Shit! He's seriously treating this like a game! Fucking damn omniscient gods! There almost always assholes!

I have to think of some kind of question… If I know anything about how big of jerks gods can be from shows I've watched, it's that if you try to bend their rules even slightly it almost never works. I have to be careful with this last question.

I took a deep breath as I got ready to ask my final question, "Why did you pick me?"

"Three! Hm… Well, you could've done better with that second one. Oh, well! What's done is done!" He said joyfully as he stood up from my chair.

"For your first question, I'll say that I'm doing it out of my own personal interests. Nothing more, nothing less. If you want to blame someone for this, then you're more than welcome to blame me as I take full responsibility."

"As for your second question, I'll simply put it as no. I hardly think of what you're going through as a game and neither should you," he locked me dead in the eyes with his own. For once, he seemed slightly serious in comparison to his carefree and goofy attitude.

"And now for the final question!" he stood confidently as a spotlight appeared on him out of thin air.

This is the guy that's messing with my life…

"To put it simply," the spotlight that shined onto him faded away slowly as he started to scratch his chin, "I can't quite remember why. What I do remember is that I've chosen you countless times. I've picked you hundreds of times in fact if that means anything for you."

Hundreds… Wait. How does that even work?!

"Hey, what does that even mean?"

"Oh, no you don't! I gave you three questions! And to think you didn't even ask for my name," he pulled out a handkerchief from his coat pocket and pretended to wipe away tears as he fake sobbed.

This guy… I can't comprehend how he's a god!

"Why would I-"

"Don't worry about it! I'll give it to you for free! First, however," the man stopped his fake sobbing as he lifted his hand that he had been holding his cane in this entire time.

The suited up man raised his right hand and faced his palm directly at my face. On his palm was a bunch of half circles it would appear. One big black half circle on one side and then a smaller half circle reflecting the larger one and going more towards the center of his palm. The same pattern repeated until it got to the direct center of his palm which had a black dot.

"Let's go for a ride," his hand started to emit some sort of energy that swirled around me.

I could feel my body being pulled forward directly into his hand. My body almost felt like it was going to be turned into mush for a second as my body passed into the middle of the energy swirling around. After I made it past that, I was

falling. Nothing was around me as I fell. Only more of the same energy that came from that man's hand was around me.

"What the hell is going on!?" I shouted in fear.

"This isn't your first time going through here," the green haired man was falling next to me. He was definitely falling like I was except he looked like he was falling head first and was completely calm about it.

"This is your first time being awake though I'd say. Pretty isn't it?"

"I'm going to kill you!" I reached my hands over to him to try and strangle him.

He somehow managed to back himself away from me during mid-fall. When he got out of range of my psychotic rage he stated, "Whoa! Whoa! I thought this would be fun for you! Man, remind me never to do this while you're awake again."

"Die!" I continued to try and murder him.

"At least let me say my name first!"

I finally managed to latch onto him slightly. I had a hold on his coat and then moved onto his neck in order to strangle him. My only goal before I hit the end of this fall was to kill this stupid god.

"My… name's… Janus!" Janus managed to get out while I shook him to and fro.

"Why won't you just die?!" I continued in my blind rage.

Before I could finish what would've been the most wonderful thing to happen in my life, Janus disappeared from my hold. What used to be an idiot god in my hands turned into absolute nothingness. I turned my head all around me to see where he had gone. He seemed to be nowhere in sight; unless he has invisibility.

There was, however, one thing that did catch my eyes attention. There was a bright light and I was falling directly for it. As I got closer and closer to it, it got brighter.

"Damn you, Janus!" I yelled out my final words before passing directly into the light.

That wraps up another chapter.

Not much got actually accomplished in this chapter besides meeting Janus. On that topic, I chose his appearance and name in accordance to two separate things. His name being in relation to the Roman God of portals and transitions and his appearance being highly alike Hazama from BlazBlue (Don't ask me about the game. I've only seen the anime. I'm sorry.)

Anyway, the next chapter or maybe the one after that will involve a new character's pov. Leave your guesses as to who it might be in a review!

While I'm talking about reviews, don't forget to leave one! Anything about the chapter would be nice.

Also, you're more than welcome to ask me any questions you might have in a PM. I'll be sure to answer them when I have the time.

Chapter 10: Village Flower

Back again. This time I'm sick. I went this whole year with nothing and these last few days just threw a wrench in that. Thanks, holidays. You bring sick family members together at the greatest of times.

Anyways, I hope you all had wonderful holidays. Here's to that New Year. May it bring more joy than the last. Also let it destroy all forms of sickness. I'm sick of being sick.

Big thanks to all of you reviewing this fic. You're all great. Seriously, go and tell someone you're great because you are.

I'll respond to a couple of reviews now before the start of this simply because. Feel free to skip past.

SilverFlameHaze: Understandable. I can't lie and say they're the best for me to write either. I definitely feel it shows. My calling seems more in the fantasy realm as well. Still, I started this fic with a set path in mind and I'll stick to it until the end. Even if I may stub my toes a few times along the way.

JDS: Never knew this before. Interesting to say the least. Either way, it's best to go based off his character I'll be portraying him as on whether or not he's trustworthy. I won't say any more than that.

Thanks to everyone else that reviewed again. I don't mean to offend if you wanted me to respond to you and I didn't. If it's a question you have, simply shoot a PM.

Anyways, no more boring talk. On with the show I suppose.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything I else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Village Flower

"You son of a-!" I shot my body up to a sitting position with a quick and sudden action. When I realized that I was seated in a bed, I looked around for Janus. Instead, I only found the room I was given to sleep in Regna Ferox and Sully holding open my door.

"Well, you seem wide awake," Sully stated as she stopped mid-way in her attempt to open the door.

I felt slightly embarrassed by my sudden outburst as I forced a small laugh, "Sorry, I was just having a dream I guess."

Stupid piece of… He just threw me back in here without as much as a warning! I'll get you back for that…

"Well, dream or not! Doesn't mean you get out of our group expedition!" Sully motioned for me to get ready and follow her out of my room.

I did exactly as she told and grabbed my gear to follow her out.

Outside of my room was the giant himself, Kellam. He was already wearing all of his armor just like Sully. I could assume they both got ready before they tried to come and wake me up.

"So is this our group or something?" I asked.

"What? You don't want to be on our team?" Sully asked me with a slight scowl.

"No, no! I was just wondering is all! Still, I'm surprised you remembered our buddy Kellam here," I said to Sully as I pointed over to Kellam whom was now next to my side.

"Actually, I had to remind her," Kellam pointed out as Sully tried to merely laugh it off.

"I was just about to go find ya when you snuck up on me! That's all," Sully said as she patted Kellam's armor.

Kellam smiled, "Oh, well… I guess that means I won't have to get ready so early next time. Thanks, Sully."

"Um… Yeah, no promises though," Sully said as she tried to not let Kellam know she was lying.

I held in the desire to explain to Kellam that what Sully had said was probably a lie in fear of getting another knuckle

sandwich from her. Rather, I decided to inquire on what it was our group had to do.

"Anyways, exactly what is our group's mission? I'm guessing we're heading to get an ingredient for Miriel, but which one exactly?"

"We're in charge on acquiring some moondrop flowers. Shouldn't be too hard I'd imagine. Apparently they grow in Ylisse so the hardest part will be getting to the area," Sully explained.

"And Kellam's paired with us?! Sorry, big guy, but you don't look suited up for a long march in that armor," I pointed out to Kellam.

"Don't worry about me. Actually, it's not that hard to move around in this stuff when you get used to it," Kellam replied with a somber smile as he showed he was still able to move slightly unencumbered.

Is he made of muscle?! Is his armor just air?! I'd pull multiple muscles if I tried to move in that armor!

Despite me being flabbergasted as to how well Kellam could move in his large armor, Sully started to walk off expecting us to follow, "Hey, we got the shortest distance to cover anyways. We might be able to make it back in time for dinner if you two kick your butts into gear."

Not wanting to make Sully wait, both me and Kellam hurried to catch up with her. Once we did, we continued on our way out of the castle until we were stopped by a familiar friend standing by the front gate. We had managed to exit out of the castle before we were stopped and were currently only standing within the castle's walls. The ground seemed to be carpeted with a layer of snow out here.

"Heading out now are we?" The very beard man himself intercepted our group before we could make it out the gates.

"Yeah, you comin' with, Auden?" Sully asked as she crossed her arms with a smirk glued to her face.

Auden looked to be exasperated as he reluctantly shook his head, "I would gladly, but I'm sure you can understand me when I tell you that I cannot."

"Why's that?" I chipped in a question.

He looked at me for a moment before turning his head as though he was directing my attention somewhere. When I turned to see what it could be, I only saw a figure that could be best described as Raimi from afar standing atop one of the walls surrounding the castle.

"I'm not catching your drift," I turned my attention back to Auden expecting a less subtle explanation.

Sully face palmed next to me as Auden simply grinned at my bewilderment.

Is there something I'm not catching?

"It's not something I could've expected you to understand anyways, Vince. I'm an old bird you see. A bird that's been flying for probably too long. My wings simply can't keep up with you youngsters anymore. I think it's about time that I found myself a nice cage, maybe find myself a mate and settled down," Auden explained his I suppose "simplified" version.

I blinked once after hearing Auden's long winded and strange explanation. A few seconds passed by as we all stood in silence and I blinked again. Still, not a single word was spoken as I could only blankly stare forward. A large gust of cold wind blew by the four of us in front of the castle's gates and I blinked again. Finally, it all hit me at once.

"A-Are you getting married?!" I shouted at the top of my lungs startling a bit of the wildlife hanging around the castle.

Surprisingly, it was Auden that shut me up before I could continue in my uncontrolled state. He quickly placed a hand over my mouth before saying, "Hey, not so loud there! It's not exactly known to the other party yet!"

He took a side glance to check on whether or not Raimi heard my outburst, but everything seemed to be normal on her part of the wall. When he managed to confirm this he audibly sighed before removing his hand that had silenced me.

"So, if it's something that isn't set in stone yet. Why inform us?" Sully managed to recover herself after she seemed to be almost in pain from I suppose my actions.

Auden looked rather shocked as he turned to Sully, "Well, that's because you all are my friends! I wanted to inform you all and wish you good luck before you set off."

"More like we're your only friends," I plainly stated taking into account the beard man only seemed to hang out with us for the most part.

Another pained expression glossed over Auden's face before he recovered with a smirk, "Come now, Vince! Surely you jest! You must know that the great Auden himself has loads of companions!"

"Nobody with loads of friends would state that they have loads of friends," Sully pointed out before I even had a chance to.

Me and Sully are thinking the same thing? That's rather shocking.

Again, Auden looked pained by our words as his head hung low, "How come everyone else was so much nicer when I told them this?"

Sully and I both looked to each other with our arms crossed across our chests before we gave Auden a shrug. Before he could react, however, the giant Kellam appeared behind him and rested both of his hands onto Auden's shoulders. Shockingly enough, Kellam actually seemed to stand taller than Auden now that I got a good look at their heights.

I will firmly stand by my statement that Kellam is a giant.

"I think it's great that you're trying to get married," Kellam stated with a somber smile that seemed to bring tears to Auden.

"Oh, big guy! I don't even remember your name, but you're so much nicer than my student Vince! And after all the secret training I gave him too!" Auden sobbed onto Kellam's armor as he embraced the giant in a large embrace.

Sully turned her head slightly to me as I rolled my eyes at the sobbing old man in front of me.

"Uh, I've told you before. My name's Kellam," Kellam silently attempted to inform Auden but was drowned out by his sobbing.

"Right, right. Callum, you're a nice guy," Auden released Kellam from his embrace and gave him a solid thumb up.

"But my name's-" Kellam tried to correct the beard man, but Sully started to push Kellam out the castle's front gates. Shockingly, she was able to do so with very little effort despite Kellam's attempts to fight it.

"Well, you've wasted enough of our time. We're heading out so just man up and do your little marriage thing already," Sully spoke back to Auden as she continued pushing the giant out the gates.

The two of them quickly started to get further and further out of sight as I was left back with Auden. I started in a walk towards the gate past him before I stopped shortly before it. Turning my head back to face him, I questioned, "So, was this your allotted business here?"

"Part of it, yeah."

"I see."

Some more silence passed between the both of us before I turned my head back around. Sully and Kellam were even further ahead of me as it seemed Sully didn't want to wait.

"Well, best of luck to you then," I extended my left arm directly out to my side and gave a thumb up back to Auden, "and I expect a front row seat to the shindig."

After I had finished talking to the beard man, I started in a jog to catch back up with my companions that were further ahead of me. Somehow even though I was certain that I was far away from him, I could hear him laughing heartily behind me.

Once I did manage to catch back up with the others, we made our way back to Ylisse. Today must be considered a warm day for everyone in Regna Ferox because I didn't immediately start shivering upon exiting the castle. The sun being directly above us in the sky might actually have something to do with that.

Nonetheless, we had begun our attempt to find this moondrop flower we needed for Miriel.

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"Sully, how much longer?" I droned from the back of our small expedition party.

"If you ask me that one more time, I swear you'll wish I had punched you instead!" Sully shouted back to me in pure

anger from atop her horse.

The sight of her fury jolted me out of my boredom but only for a moment as she turned away leaving me to try and find things to occupy my time once again.

We had passed Regna Ferox's borders and made it back into Ylisse not too long ago. The sun was setting on the horizon and that meant it would be getting dark soon as well. That didn't rightfully mean much, however. We had just made it out of the cold so the cold night wouldn't be too much different. The only change to the walk would be our lack of vision; luckily, we brought lanterns just for that reason.

Our march had been trekking along for a while now and both my mind and body were starting to feel it. My legs were slightly sore since I elected to walk instead of ride Choc. I thought it would be better to give the poor horse a break rather than force him to go back the way he had already tired himself out going through.

There was another reason I had decided to walk as well which reminds me…

"Kellam, you still there?" I called out for the large man in armor.

"Still right next to you," Kellam replied.

Unlike other times I've done this exact same thing, I wasn't as startled to find Kellam next to me. Whether it was from my sheer amount of boredom I was in or because I was getting used to finding Kellam so close by I wouldn't know.

After performing my routine checkup on Kellam, I focused back on the march. We had just made it back through the mountains we passed through on our way to Regna Ferox. Since we were just a small group, we were making better time than before even though Sully was the only one on horseback.

Still, just because we were making better time didn't mean it wasn't taking agonizingly long. Hours have passed by and the only action I've been able to perform is walking.

Left, right, left, right. Rock… Bigger rock. Crap, I'm bored.

Letting out an audible sigh, I attempted to distract my mind from complete boredom.

Coming from the modern world into a medieval styled one is difficult on the mind. What do people even do for entertainment half the time?

Seeing that I really didn't have much else for belongings in my possession, I went for the only other thing I was currently holding; my sword. I took the sword out of its scabbard and held it in front of me as we continued to march along.

I'd have to admit, this thing had seen better days than today. It seemed my sword was distinctly chipped in a couple of places along the blade's edges. Honestly, I haven't sharpened the damn thing not once since I got it despite having slight knowledge on how to sharpen blades. Somehow, I feel like not sharpening it has played a role in the condition it's in now.

Still, if I could avoid the chipped sections being struck, I think it'll last another battle or two. At least I should have long enough to sharpen it back to a better shape.

The day continued on as we marched through some open plains. I distracted myself from boredom by practicing spinning my sword around which I fumbled doing multiple times; luckily, I didn't manage to cut myself with the rugged thing.

Before long, the sun fully set past the horizon and it was fairly difficult at this point to see without a light.

We're going to need a lantern at this-

"Guys," A familiar voice spoke up as a hand stopped me from walking further.

The hand was definitely covered in metal and firm in its grip. It stopped me dead in my tracks causing me to almost drop my sword I was still trying to spin in my hands onto my feet. When I turned to see who had done it, I noticed that it was the giant.

"Kellam, what's the deal? You could've made me lose a toe!" I practically was shouting at him since he gave me a minor heart attack.

"Hm? What's the holdup this time? Is Vincent playing in dirt again? I told you that you could give him a good whacking if

he was messing around," Sully had stopped and was slowly turning her horse around to face me and Kellam that were following behind her.

Sully's statements quickly brought my temper on the rise as I was quick to respond, "I told you once already, I was not playing!"

Sully, however, was equally quick to merely wave off my rising anger.

"No, I've been saying it for a while now. There's smoke over there," Kellam released his hand from my shoulder as he pointed out in a random direction. I followed his finger and tried my best to make out what he was pointing towards.

It's almost impossible to see out here. Way too dark to see even with a lantern that far. How the hell can he see when he doesn't even look like his eyes are open?! What kind of shenanigans is this?!

"Kellam, I think you're finally starting to see ghosts like yourself," Sully shook her head in disapproval after she wasn't able to see what Kellam was pointing too either.

"I'm serious, you guys! There's definitely some kind of fire over there!" Kellam was desperately pleading with Sully and me.

He's pretty sure of himself…

"Why don't we just check it out, Sully? It couldn't hurt to make sure," I made a grab for one of our lanterns and lit it quickly with some flint and steel.

"Fine, but if this is a colossal waste of time, you'll be put into double time to make it up," Sully also grabbed her lantern and lit it with zero effort before starting off in the direction Kellam was motioning to.

"I'm trusting you, Kellam. So point out the way," I motioned for Kellam to lead in front of myself.

"I'm telling you, you'll see. I know something's going on over there," Kellam walked forward unerringly in the direction he was so focused on.

What's the deal here? Couldn't we have just found some flowers and be done with this? This is ridiculous. I swear, I'll start a flower shop so fast just so that I don't have to go looking for them again.

A good few minutes of walking through these open fields continued on without much difference. We followed Kellam's leading around the edge of the forest as we slowly curved around it. Nothing was spotted within our lantern's gaze as we marched. It looked like Sully and I were starting to feel like we were being led on a wild goose chase.

"Kellam, I understand that we don't notice you a lot and that you'd probably like if something was less noticeable than you; but that doesn't mean you should go making up stuff," I stated as I continued to shine my lantern around our party.

"No, no. There! Look over there!" Kellam was distinctly at least a couple of decibels louder than usual as he pointed off the distance for the second time today.

"Where are you looking this ti-" Sully strolled her horse over to Kellam's side to get a better understanding on where he was pointing when her eyes widened.

I took note of this reaction and followed Kellam's finger to whatever he was aiming at. Similar to Sully, my eyes grew wide as I saw what we had been going towards this whole time.

The orange blur, bellowing smoke rising up into the sky only to be pulled off by the wind, and the agonizingly muffled screams; it was a village fire. I wouldn't be able to forget the first time I was caught in one. Its moments were permanently stored away into my mind's reservoirs to forever scar me.

The fire seemed to be only just now picking up into gear which would mean Kellam spotted this out the very moment it was starting. The smoke was blowing directly over into the middle of the plains we had been marching through which must've given him a good header on where to go.

"Sorry, I ever doubted ya, big guy. No more wastin' time. Get your butts into gear! This is what we Shepherds are trained for!" Sully wasted no time in having her horse gallop straight for the village.

Sully's tendency to simply be gunho about a lot of these battles puts me off balance slightly. I mean, certainly I can handle fighting and even having to kill a few bandits. My will to do so is absolute at this point. I've done it plenty of times

by now. I've worked it out with my guilty subconscious that it was for the greater good.

So why can't I follow after her?!

Although I wanted to run in behind Sully, my legs failed to respond to my commands. I felt as though I had gained a couple hundred pounds in the matter of seconds. Not even my arms could be moved at this point. I was completely frozen.

Will there be bandits? Would I have to see it again? The bodies of innocents? Powerless individuals caught in this bloody mess.

My grip tightened around the handle of my sword as I gritted my teeth. The beating of my heart increased in pace as I felt it harder to keep it under control. Fear was welling up in my chest. A final attempt to will my body forward was poured directly into my legs. All of my thoughts were concentrated solely on continuing on. Still, I was glued to the ground as I was forced to watch Sully disappear into the inferno of a blur that used to be a town.

No, no. I can't. If I do, I'll die. There's so few of us. We can't save them all. Maybe a few, but not all. It's hopeless. There's no point.

My knees were starting to buckle. I almost felt like letting out a small laugh from my inability to find courage. Kellam was looking back to me. He looked to be saying something back to me; I was unable to make out the words.

Suddenly, I saw a villager collapse a good distance in front of Kellam. A bandit was in hot pursuit to catch the individual.

Female? Probably old enough to have a kid. The poor soul…

There wasn't anything I could do. The woman would die and I would be forced to relive this moment for my failure.

The bandit closed in on the woman. I could hear him manically laughing from here. Kellam made a mad dash to save the woman as soon as possible. There was no hope. He would never make it in time even despite the fact the woman was desperately crawling towards him. He could attempt to toss his spear but if he missed there would be no do over. He hadn't brought his javelins with him so he would be throwing an unbalanced weapon towards the bandit. It would be a shot in the dark at this point.

Closing my eyes, I readied myself for the painful death cry to arise. I knew that it would be coming and I would rather null my senses as much as possible. Seconds seemed like minutes as I awaited the sound. Nothing happened. I cracked my eyelids opened and what I saw shocked me.

A boy that couldn't be any older than me had stepped into the bandit's path. He blocked the bandit's sword with what seemed to be a pitchfork. The bandit's blade was caught in the prongs of the pitchfork. I'm certain of it, he was wearing a pot. Even I could make out that feature of his attire from this distance.

Is that… No, it couldn't be. Donnel?

The two of them looked like they were locked in a power struggle. Both of them were trying to disarm the other even though I don't think Donnel even understands the meaning of a disarm yet. It didn't take long, however, for the bandit to get tired of wasting time as he threw a punch directly for Donnel's face. It connected with little problem and sent the village boy to the ground.

After taking care of the boy, the bandit continued towards the woman. Luckily, Donny had bought enough time for Kellam to catch up. The bandit was practically shoulder checked by Kellam's giant shield as he was sent flying back in the air. Now being collapsed on the ground, the bandit scrambled to defend himself. He had no chance to do so though when his chest was pierced by Kellam's spear.

They saved her? There was no way…

Kellam seemed to hold a short discussion with the woman and what looked to be Donnel before pointing off towards me in the distance. Shortly thereafter, what I believe is Donny came running over to me. He kept a hand on his head to keep his pot from falling off the whole way.

"Pardon me, sir. That big ghostly fella' told me to get you movin your hooves!" The boy I will presume is Donny was practically pushing me to go forward.

"My hooves?" I finally managed to take a step forward thanks to his pushing.

"You know! Your trotters! Your dogs! It's as easy as leading a pig to its slop!" He rushed in front of me and started to jog in place.

It was slightly amusing watching Donnel attempt to show me how to walk in the few short seconds that it was happening.

He has more resolve to go on than I do. Hmph…

I took another step forward followed by another. Soon, I was fully walking forward with my sword gripped tightly in one hand and my lantern in the other. I passed by Donnel who seemed perplexed by my movements.

"You alright there, sir?" He questioned me as I passed by.

What was it again? Ah, that's it.

"Whatever happens, happens," I mumbled as I kept walking forward.

"You've got a weird noggin' there, sir," Donnel sounded confused.

I may not save all of them, but damnit, I will save whoever I can. I'm not going to die. No, I don't ever want to die. My resolve to do so is absolute. My will to continue on is sealed. No turning back. I will live!

I set my lantern down and diminished the flame. I took a sudden deep breath and gripped my sword with both of my hands. In a quick motion, my body erupted into a full-blown sprint. I was charging towards the burning village without a second thought. I wouldn't let my past fears consume me again.

In little time, I had made it to the outskirts of the small village. My eyes darted from building to building. Some were blazing in a bright flame; others were already collapsed in burnt ruble. A few buildings, however, were still completely intact. As I was scanning the solid buildings surrounding me, a window in one of them broke into shards as something was tossed out it. The object landed a few feet away from me allowing me to identify it.

A frying pan?

Following the flying frying pan, a woman screamed as she stumbled out the buildings door. A bandit was in pursuit of her.

No more thoughts. Take care of the problem.

I was swift in my charge. It took me no less than a couple of seconds to cover the ground between me and the bandit. He swung towards me with his broadsword to which I sidestepped it easily.

Unrefined swordplay. Punish him for it.

After his sword was finished in its swing, I took the chance. Now being positioned on the bandit's side, I swung for his back earning a good chop directly through his armor. My blade cut into him and more than likely damaged more than a few vital organs. He let out a final cry of pain before slumping to the ground in front of this house.

"Thank you, sir! Oh, praise your good deeds! May Naga bless you!" The woman praised me for what I had done.

I returned to her a somber smile, "You should head out of the village for now. Wait outside of it for a while until its safe. The Shepherds will handle this."

"You're a part of the Shepherds? Thank goodness! We're saved!" The woman heeded my orders and ran out of the village as fast as possible.

I felt a distinct pleasure in hearing how pleased she was that I was a part of the Shepherds. I was a Shepherd that had saved her.

Before I could be lost in my ego, I noticed a figure approaching me. It had just passed the woman that had went running out of the village.

Donnel?

Sure enough, it was indeed the kitchenware wearing boy himself. He came running to me with his pitchfork in one of his hands and his other hand holding his pot on his head. When he arrived to me, he sounded like he was out of breath. I waited a few seconds for him to catch his breath as it seemed he had something to say. When he managed to do so, he

straightened himself and saluted me.

"I'm sorry, sir, if I'm in your way but I would like to lend a helping hand!" He sounded more upright than usual. There wasn't as much farmer boy in him as there usually was.

"You'd like to help? With what?" I asked.

Donnel seemed to manage to loosen up as he noticed I was willing to hear him out, "It's just… They got my mama, sir. I reckon they ain't exactly gonna be friendly folk with her either."

"So you'd like to help save her. Am I right?"

"Well, that's what I reckon I want to do. Gosh, I'm not sure," Donnel tried pulling his pot hat further over his head when he noticed one of the burning buildings collapse from lack of stability.

He's second guessing himself after he just saved that woman out there? I guess when put on the spot he'll act but otherwise he's unsure. If that's the case…

"We haven't much time for this. Either I will be saving your mother alone, or with your assistance," I extended my hand to Donnel for a handshake, "What do you say?"

He looked at my hand for a moment before glancing back to my face that was completely stone serious. When he appeared to have made up his mind, I could see the fire light up in his eyes.

Donnel quickly hocked a loogie into his hand and gripped onto mine with the very same hand. I was slightly taken aback by this action but remembered that he was a farmer boy after all. When the handshake was finished, I was quick to try and wave off some of his saliva.

"Name's Donny- I-I mean Donnel, sir! I'll help save mama or my name's Archibald, and it's not!" Donnel hefted his pitchfork up with both of his hands and got ready to follow me.

I don't even… I'm not sure that means he will help or he won't. Whatever. He already spit in my hand. That must mean yes, right?

"Name's," I look down to my hand and noticed that there was still some saliva on it that I quickly wiped away, "Vincent. Stay close by, Donnel. Also, let's leave the hero stuff for another day, alright?"

Donnel nodded his head in understanding before I set off to continue running through the village. He followed close behind me like I informed him. Without wasting another second, I scanned around us as we ran through the village. I was just beginning to think it was a little to desolate for a bandit attack when a crack of lightning flew past my face.

My first instinct was to stop on the spot. Doing so, I turned my head to see where the attack had come from. A mage looking bandit was holding a yellowish book in his hand as lightning crackled off the other. The bandit appeared to be female with long dark violet hair and after confirming the color similarities between this bandit and the last couple, I could presume that these were definitely Plegian bandits.

The female mage let out a sadistic laugh in my direction before signaling for a couple of other bandits behind her, "Go ahead and crush their skulls would you, dearie? If you don't, I might have to shock both you and them."

What seemed to be her grunts were quick to follow orders. They hoped to and came rushing past her. The mage, on the other hand, looked like she was prepping another spell as she exited out of the alleyway she was standing in.

Shit, 3v2? Hardly good odds here. Not to mention I can't put too much pressure onto Donny.

The first bandit to come running past the mage went straight for me with his hand axe. The other bandit seemed more interested in going after Donnel. Donny looked to be ready enough for the attack so I didn't want to worry too much about him.

The bandit that was charging for me went straight in for a crack at lobbing my head off. I stepped out of his range just in the nick of time as I felt the wind from his attack rush past my face. These bandits seemed incredibly sadistic since just the thought of attacking me pleased the man in front of me.

With another swing of his axe, the bandit tried to chop directly into my neck and shoulder. I had to continue backpedaling in order to stay out of his range.

He doesn't seem too have any clear intention of letting up. I can't get into his guard like this.

The bandit in front of me looked like he was ready to go all day with his swings. Another one from the left; a second one followed directly after from the right.

Now!

Seeing the chance, I went straight into his guard after he finished his wide swing from my right. I stabbed forward with my sword in my right hand as I grabbed onto his hand axe with my left. Both succeeded and I had stabbed the bandit in the gut. Even though I had done so, however, the bandit seemed to be in a rush of adrenaline as there didn't look to be a single ounce of pain in him.

The bandit grinned wildly at me as our faces were mere inches apart. Before I could think of another action, his head connected with my own. I reeled back from the attack as I released his hand axe and withdrew my sword.

The headbutt he delivered me definitely cracked my forehead somewhere as I could feel my life's liquid crawl down my face. However, the same injury was on the bandit in front of me. A small amount of blood crept down to his mouth and he creepily licked some of it. I felt the urge to be disgusted by this man, but repressed it seeing that it would do me no good right now.

Damn, that hurt. Alright, just have to finish him next time. No prob-

My thoughts were cut short as I could see a blinding light flying towards me. I didn't need to be told twice that it was the very same lightning I saw before.

I made the only move I could make in the time. My body sidestepped to the right in order to get out of the way, but was a little too slow. Part of the bolt collided into my left arm. A wave of pain traveled directly from the point of impact throughout my whole body. After the sudden pain died down and my senses wheeled up again, I could feel the scorch mark left on my arm.

That is not going to be pleasant in the morning.

The bandit directly in front of me laughed at my pain and quickly leaped towards me. I hadn't much time to do so, but I managed to duck under his attack and stab for him. This time my attack was aimed higher than before as I intended to kill him.

Without a doubt, I fell the bandit as my sword pierced through his upper chest and his body clumped forward onto my own. I struggled to toss him to the side thanks to my injured arm and glimpsed the violet mage smiling wickedly at me.

"Did that sting? Maybe you'd like another sample? Or perhaps," She shifted her stance and faced towards Donnel whom was struggling to fend off the other bandit, "your friend would like a taste."

"Hm? A taste of what? How pathetic you're gonna look when we kick your ass?" I asked with a smug smirk.

The violet haired mage was sent into a deep rage by my statement, "Kick my what?! We'll see about that when you're friend is charred!"

She lashed out a bolt of lightning that soared even faster through the air than the previous two. It was heading directly for Donnel's backside; that is, if Kellam wasn't standing in the way.

The bolt of lightning scorched into Kellam's shield as the giant peered over from the other side of it.

"It's rude to attack others that don't know you're going to," the giant plainly stated.

Isn't that kind of what you do a lot of the time?!

"W-What? Where did-" the bandit mage was at a loss for words when another surprise snuck up on her.

"I've gotta say, it would be nice to see your ass get kicked," A familiar red headed knight spoke up from behind the mage.

Sully's sword was lowered directly at the mage's head from atop her horse. The mage was shivering in fear.

"Although, I think you'll have to deal with my sword instead. Taste my steel!" Sully struck the female mage across the back seemingly killing her in one swing as she collapsed lifeless.

The only bandit left in the vicinity then was the one Donny was in a tussle with. It didn't seem to be going his way entirely.

He had the bandit's blade caught in his pitchfork like the other time, but this bandit definitely had more upper body strength than Donny.

Kellam was about to move in to help him when I gripped onto him.

"Hang on. Let him handle this," I told him.

I know it seems bad to leave an untrained fighter fending for himself, but I learned for myself in a similar way. Also, I didn't want Donnel to feel like he was helpless and needed to be saved.

"You're a cold bastard sometimes, Vincent," Sully spoke up from where she struck down the mage.

I shook my head in disagreement, "No, this is how he needs to learn. Whether he's a fighter or a quitter."

The bandit and Donny continued in their struggle. Finally, the bandit swung his blade to the side in order to free it from Donny's pitchfork. Realizing this, Donnel retracted his pitchfork surprisingly. He freed the bandit's sword on his own accord. As the bandit grinned gleefully at this, he went for an attack towards Donnel. The kitchenware wearing boy backpedaled dodging the attack as if he had done so before.

He's a fast learner! Guess he had the aptitude skill for a reason.

Adjusting the pot on his head for a mere second, Donnel got the same fire in his eyes that I had seen earlier. If looks could kill, his would certainly maim someone.

"Gosh darnit!" Donnel roared out as he charged towards his attacker.

The bandit was completely ready for the charge, however. He readied himself to block the attack by locking himself and Donny into a power struggle like before.

Like predicted, the bandit's blade was caught in the middle of the pitchfork's prongs. With all of his force, the bandit pushed back against Donny. Except, Donny's charge wasn't stopped. It wasn't deterred in the slightest by the bandit. Donny used all of his strength to push his pitchfork towards his attacker. The bandit's arms buckled under the sudden force and bent back allowing for Donnel's pitchfork to pierce through him. With a final grunt, the bandit fell backwards with Donnel's pitchfork still sticking out of him.

Donny was panting heavily as he released his grip on his pitchfork. He fell backwards onto his butt as his pot fell off as well.

Knowing now that his fight was over, I approached him on the ground and kneeled down next to him.

"Did I… did I do it? Is he… dead?" Donnel asked me.

I smirked to the village boy before handing him his pot that had fallen off, "Yeah, you did great there, Donny. Come on. Your mom is waiting, you know?"

Donnel nodded with a grin and took his pot. He reequipped it onto his head and I extended a hand to help him up. He hastily grabbed ahold of it and I hoisted him up. We then walked back over to Sully and Kellam.

"Well, you village boys sure know how to get along," Sully stated with a grin.

"Huh?" I was confused.

Village boy? Oh, right! I said that I came from a mountain village!

"Well, it's only natural I guess," I attempted to recover.

Sully laughed at me, "You two look like two peas in a pod if you ask me!"

Donnel and I both exchanged looks at each other.

Are we that similar? Huh… I don't see it.

Donnel seemed to come to the same conclusion as I when we simultaneously shrugged earning even more laughter from Sully and even a bit from Kellam.

As if right on cue to end the laughing, however, a wood beam fell next to us from one of the burning buildings.

"Right, we've still got a village to save people. What are you still doing!? That's an order to get moving! Now!" Sully shouted at the three of us as Donnel and I were quick to salute her.

/WWWW\

After finishing searching for more Plegian bandits we went directly into the next step. The next step took well into the morning of the next day; putting out the fires.

The most difficult part about being a Shepherd is the cleanup after a mission, I swear! These fires are not easy to take care of with just a bucket of water. Still, we did manage to quell the flames and save most of the houses. Roughly a quarter of this village must've burnt down. Not to mention that it was agonizingly painful to find some villagers were killed during the raid. There wasn't an awfully large number, but it was a number nonetheless.

The villagers asked us if we would like to stay for the funerals, but we had to politely decline. Finding the flower was our top priority and we already wasted enough time.

That was about around the time that we were about to start heading out. Of course, we weren't able to do so until Donnel said his good byes.

"Oh, my little Donny's going out on an adventure! Now you make sure you eat plenty of vegetables or else the Brussels sprout monsters will come and take you away at night," Donny's mother informed her son as though he was still a child.

"Shucks, mama, you don't have to say it so loud," Donnel was incredibly embarrassed by his mother's actions as any young boy with a mom like that would be.

"You be safe now ok, Donny," Donnel's mother embraced him into a hug before releasing him and sending him off with a wave.

"Don't play in the mud too much, and remember to bathe for cryin' out loud!" Donnel's mother continued to shout as we left the village.

Sully and I held in the urge to burst into laughter at Donnel's embarrassment. After we calmed ourselves and his mother wasn't in audible range anymore, I turned my head to him.

"You sure you want to be in the Shepherds? Let me be the first to tell you it's a lot of work," I pointed out as I tried to stretch out the pain in my shoulders still.

"Course I am! This is like a dream come true! I git ah learn about all kinds of things now! Like that stack of papers you got from the lady! She shot lightning from her hands!" Donnel looked like a child experiencing his first ever rollercoaster. He was ecstatic about the thought of what could be and what couldn't.

Glancing to the 'stack of papers' as he called it in my hand, I realized he was referring to the magic tome I had swiped off that bandit mage. I still couldn't make out a lick of what was in it, but figured it was valuable either way.

Thinking about the magic tome, it made me remember that my left arm got scorched by the chick. The villagers were nice enough to apply some kind of ointment to the burn and bandage me up, but it still stung.

"You mean this tome? Yeah, that chick was pretty electrifying. She definitely shocked me to attention," I replied jokingly with puns.

Donnel was surprisingly fast to catch on as he laughed, "I get cha. It all sure was a shocking experience, wasn't it?"

Donnel put heavy emphasis on the word shocking which caused me to chuckle in response.

Terrible puns have to be the best ones.

"Sorry, to bust up the fun, but we still have a flower to find damnit!" Sully was quick to get back onto the mission.

"Right, we still haven't a clue where it could be around here," I replied dejectedly.

"Ya'll lookin' for a flower?" Donnel asked.

"You got any ideas, metal head? We're looking for a moondrop flower," Sully returned.

Donnel sparked up at Sully's statement and hurriedly ran off in a random direction, "Come on! I know the way like the back of my pig pen!"

Without much else of a lead, we followed the local village boy as he rushed into the forest that was at the side of his village. We continued in our pursuit after Donnel and almost had lost him at times.

Finally, we caught back up to him and he pointed us out to a grove of white flowers. The flowers seemingly glowed as beams of light fell onto them through the roof of the forest.

"They definitely match the description," Sully dismounted from her horse and pulled out a bottle.

She plucked a few of the flowers and gently placed them into the bottle.

"A day in this shouldn't be bad. Plus, we got well over the calling order," Sully walked back over to the rest of us with a grin as she held up the bottle now full of flowers.

"Ya'll came out here for these flowers?" Donnel decided to ask as he started to lead us out of the forest.

"It's a long story. Either way, good work there, Donny," I pulled Donnel into a loose headlock for a second as we continued forward out of the forest.

With our ingredients collected, that only left the others to succeed in their missions. We'll then be able to concoct some kind of antidote to save Chrom!

Vaike, I swear. You'd better not screw this one up!

There's another large update for all of you.

Seriously, I just killed myself to finish this thing. Hope you liked it.

I can't quite tell if it's fully fluffed out at the moment. Let me know if there's some glaring error or horrible grammar usage somewhere.

Anyways, I finally did the first paralogue and we in return get Donnel. Things can't get better than that can they? Ok, maybe they can, but until I see Flying King Robo Santa Jesus I will stand by this being as great as things will get.

Vincent's getting more and more battle hardened. Whether or not this is good or bad is up to you to decide.

Some references and quotes thrown in here. Point them out if you spot them!

I'm sure we can all tell who gets the next chapter's spotlight.

My mind can't find anything else to talk about so I think that's it.

Leave a review on what you thought about the chapter. Don't be afraid to send a PM with ideas or questions either.

Chapter 11: Ol' Teach

Next chapter here for you all. It's a new pov and all so you'll have to bear with me if I don't quite get this character's personality down on the first try. Hopefully, however, I did manage to capture it well enough.

Anyways, you guys are doing great once again with your support! It makes writing these chapters all the more enjoyable!

Have fun reading!

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\WWWW\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything I else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Ol' Teach

"Oh, my lady Lissa! Your delicate arms look strained by the weight of that staff. Allow me to hold it for you, and perhaps you can hold onto these flowers for me?" That Virion fellow made another attempt at giving Lissa some flowers.

Heh. I saw him pick those flowers down the road. I easily got better ones! They're yellow like the Vaike's hair!

"Surely you'd rather hold onto Ol' Teach's flowers, Lissa! They smell almost as good as him!" I proclaimed to her knowing that she would take them almost instantly; except she didn't.

"Ah, that won't really be necessary. A-Actually, I'm going to check on Robin if that's alright," Lissa scurried away from both me and Virion almost too quickly.

Virion scowled at me and I returned the same expression. Lissa had made it to Robin's side now and was out of ear shot.

"Look at what you did you brute! You've frightened the lady!" Virion dropped the flowers he was holding and crossed his arms. He made sure to get into my personal space while we were marching.

"The Vaike scare the ladies? You have me mistaken for you, feather man," I increased the intensity of my scowl that outmatched his by a mile.

"Women would never be afraid of me! Why just the other day-" Virion went on to reminisce about what I think he believes is a true story on how many women talk to him.

"Tch… Perv," I grumbled during his story.

Virion gasped at my comment, "Are you suggesting I would do ill deeds?! I'd never!"

"You sure sound defensive about it," I smirked.

"W-Why you! I challenge you to a duel!" Virion stopped in his tracks and was drawing his bow.

"Finally, something exciting! Bring it on, feather man!" I was brimming with pleasure as I pulled my axe off my back.

"Would you two stop?!" Another voice shouted to the both of us.

Both Virion and I looked to see who was yelling at us. Honestly, being yelled at is pretty common for Ol' Teach, but this one was pretty serious. When we looked at who was yelling at the both of us, we saw that our tactician Robin was the yeller.

Robin looked like he was brimming with anger almost. It was kind of unusual. Lissa was standing behind Robin while sticking her tongue out to Virion and me.

"Yes, group leader?" Virion politefully responded while I stood silent.

Robin grumbled something before unfolding a map in his hands, "Honestly, I get the hardest jobs sometimes. Come over here you two."

Before grouping back up with Robin, I turned to face Virion, "You know Ol' Teach would've won."

Virion made a clicking sound with his tongue as he was the first to walk towards Robin. I grinned victoriously as I went to follow behind him.

In a few seconds, both Virion and I made it to Robin and the tactician seemed glued to the map in his hands. He tapped a few times before looking up to confirm we were both here. Lissa was already peering over the tactician's shoulder to see the map as well.

"We've been marching for a while now so we should be coming up on the village soon. I believe we're right about here," Robin placed a finger on a point of the map before dragging it to another spot, "and the village should be somewhere around here."

"Wow. We're so far away from the capital now," Lissa spoke up from behind the tactician.

Virion nodded, "Indeed, and why was it we were coming all the way out here again?"

"Need a refresher eh, feather man? Even the Vaike remembers!" I laughed at Virion causing him to immediately frown.

"Well, Vaike, why don't you remind us all?" Lissa asked with a sly smile.

"U-Uh, well maybe our leader would like to! I wouldn't want to steal Robin's job!" I stated while placing a hand on Robin's shoulder.

I know where we're going! Yeah! I just… Can't say is all.

"No, you can go ahead, Vaike. I bet Ol' Teach knows," Robin said with a smile as well. At this point, even Virion had a smirk plastered across his face. They were all looking at me!

"Well, I mean… The Vaike can't. Too sick. Can't talk," I started to cough.

Everyone started to laugh.

"H-Hey, what's so funny?!" I wasn't very pleased, but everyone seemed to ignore me.

"Anyways, Virion, we're heading out to this village because a merchant is supposedly resting at it. That very same merchant is said to have one of the items Miriel needs for her antidote she's brewing," Robin astutely informed us all.

"That lizard's tongue, right?" Lissa asked.

"Right, the Ravenous Feroxian Lizard. I remember that part," Virion added in.

Robin nodded affirmatively at everyone's comments before folding the map back up again, "And all we need to do is find this merchant and buy these teeth. Shouldn't be too hard if we do find this person. Otherwise," He paused for a long moment.

During his pause I shot in, "Lizard hunting! So it's easy either way!"

Lissa gagged at the thought, "Pass. I do not want to go pulling a lizard's tongue. Let's just find the merchant instead."

Robin started back in the march, "It could be fun, Lissa. You should always try new things."

"What?! You're crazy to think that would be fun!" Lissa didn't enjoy the idea.

"Whoa! Lissa, watch out! It's the lizard!" Robin pointed off into some bushes.

Lissa immediately shrieked and hid behind the tactician that had started to laugh.

"The Vaike will catch it! Charge!" I went charging for the lizard our tactician spotted.

Without a second thought, I jumped into the bush and searched throughout it. There wasn't any lizard in sight. Everyone else was laughing again.

"Why are you all laughing again?!" I shouted as I went to another bush to find the lizard, "It'll get away!"

Robin had started to march away once again, "Sorry, Vaike. I don't think it was a lizard. I must've been seeing things."

I emerged from the bushes and caught back up with the others scratching my head, "You need to get your eyes checked, Robin. Can't blame ya though. Nobody has eyesight like Ol' Teach!"

I erupted into laughter before a hand covered my mouth. It was Robin and he quickly shushed me before pulling us all behind some trees.

He quietly directed our attention further ahead of us. There was a wagon with a couple of people standing around it on a bridge. It looked like there was a lot of commotion.

"Some kind of robbery?" Virion decided to ready his bow.

Just then, a person was kicked off the wagon and into the river. The water seemed shallow as the person stood up shouting at the fleeing wagon. The others that were standing around the wagon hopped into the back it would seem.

"It would appear so. They look like bandits," Robin changed his cover to a tree further ahead.

"Do we always have to run into trouble?" Lissa sounded tired as she held her staff at the ready.

I merely grinned as I readied my axe, "Bout time we got some fun on our hands! It's Vaike time!"

Fueled by excitement, I started to run in pursuit of the wagon. I could hear some shouting from my companions from behind me. They must be cheering me on.

Don't worry, guys! Ol' Teach doesn't disappoint!

My sprinting lead me past the individual that was kicked off their wagon. He seemed shocked by my speed as I ran past him. I don't blame him.

Nobody's faster than me! Not even that wagon!

I caught up behind the fleeing wagon in a little under a minute or two. They weren't expecting the fastest man on earth to be chasing them so they weren't prepared.

"What in the-! Hey, get away from us you bastard!" The man leading the oxen shouted at me before trying to whip the oxen to a faster speed.

I wasn't about to allow this as I grabbed onto him with my free hand and pulled myself onto the rolling wagon. I was determined to pull him off. He fought against me with one of his hands and his foot. Both of these were useless in stopping me.

"You're a stubborn one! Would one of you help me already?!" the man shouted to the back of the wagon and soon enough another man popped out from behind the cloth covering the back. He had a sword in hand.

That doesn't look good.

The new bandit jabbed his sword for me, but I leaped towards the front of the wagon and barely caught myself on one of the oxen. Holding on to a moving animal would be hard for some, but it was an easy task for the Vaike! Still, to a normal person, it would look like I was having some amount of trouble keeping myself from falling completely.

"Who is this guy?! Stop the damn wagon!" The other bandit told his driver pal.

The driver of the wagon pulled back hard on the oxen and the sudden stop caused me to fall off. I rolled for a good few feet before I could stop myself.

I definitely let that happen .*Yup, definitely.*

The bandits infesting the wagon filed out as I managed to stand myself up with a smirk. There looked to be about four of them. Each of them was holding some kind of sword besides one that had an axe like me. The axe holder looked like he was the driver. The driver was completely bald it would seem as his head shined in the sun's light. It was slightly blinding he was so bald. He was also standing at a towering height that almost even impressed me.

"You trying to be some kind of hero, huh? Well, heroes really piss me off, you know?" The axe wielder hefted his axe over his shoulder.

I mimicked his stance, "Well isn't that great cause you're not dealing with a hero. You're dealing with Ol' Teach now!"

The man with the axe looked confused, "Ol Te… Alright, who's the idiot that got followed by the crazy person?" His gang of bandits all simultaneously shook their heads to his question.

My honor was insulted by his statement. I was about to shout at him, but he cut me off before I could, "Whatever… Let's take care of this, boys. The bosses don't enjoy having to wait."

Each of the other three nodded and started to circle me with their swords drawn. They've boxed me in ready to attack. I had to quickly get into a fighting position.

Uh, not even I like these odds.

The three sword wielders charged for me. Every one of my sides was at jeopardy besides my front.

I lowered my body mass and prepared to either block or dodge the attacks. Since the axe holder was blocking my front but not really charging I still didn't have anywhere to escape to.

Two swords came chopping for me from my sides. I raised my axe on my right to deflect one attack while I used my leather guard on my left to hopefully absorb the other one. They both were blocked and I managed to not get my left arm chopped into. Now the guy behind me was going to stab at me.

Have to roll out of the way!

I rolled forward to dodge the last swordsman. It was barely successful as I could feel the man's sword graze over me during my roll. Behind me now, however, was the man with the axe. I could see his shadow towering over me as he lifted his axe over his head while two of the other bandits were closing in on me again.

Lots of problems for Ol' Teach right now!

I looked for a way out of my problem. Thinking quickly, I held my axe vertically over my head. The bandit's axe recoiled off of mine and chipped into it a little. That didn't leave me happy.

Without anytime to recover, the other two bandits were coming to attack me again. Instead of dealing with them again, I turned to face the axe holder. I immediately went for a shoulder check on him. We were close together already so he didn't have time to react. My body bowled through his and I continued to run over him until I had him in between me and his friends.

My idea seemed partially successful since one of the bandits in hot pursuit of me almost tripped over his companion. Another one managed to get around his downed friend and come towards me. He took a horizontal swipe for me that I backpedaled through. His next attack was a stab. I dodged it as well and took a swipe for him with my own axe. I caught him off guard by the fact that my reach was longer than it looked thanks to my long arms!

I cleaved into him and pulled my axe out swiftly. The bandit stumbled for a few seconds clutching his side wound before he collapsed.

"You're a tough little one! Don't just stand there, idiots! Go get the bastard!" The axe man had gotten back to his feet and was commanding his friends to fight as he came running for me.

I was easily ready to take on all three of them. I mean, I already fought four and took out one! I could take on a platoon of these guys! Except an arrow whizzed by my head and landed directly in one of the bandit's chests. The other two bandits stopped dead in their tracks. They looked to their friend on the ground and took note of the arrow.

When they looked back, a bolt of lightning crashed into the other knocking him out. The last one standing was the axe wielder whom quickly surrendered by dropping his axe and raising his hands up.

"Ok, ok! Look, I don't want to die just… be reasonable alright!?" He knelt down to the ground with his hands directly above his head.

After seeing that he looked reasonably less threatening, I cocked my head back to see my party catching up. I gave them a grin and a thumb up before they made it to me.

"Hey, don't worry! Ol' Teach softened them up for you!" I informed my party of my victory.

"That was reckless of you to do, Vaike! You need to think your actions through!" Robin wasn't immediately congratulating me.

What's wrong with him?

"What? Things were just fine! Jeez, sometimes you sound twice your age," I turned my head to not face my group.

Robin exhaled a long sigh, "At least wait for me to make a plan next time."

I chuckled and pulled him into a headlock, "Sure, as long as you promise to loosen up around the Vaike! Also, keep me on the frontlines!"

Robin smiled a little and when he did I let him out of my headlock.

"Um, so am I under arrest or something?" The last bandit awkwardly asked.

Coincidentally, Virion apparently had some spare rope that we used to tie the bandit to a nearby tree.

"Why do you carry rope?" I asked.

"You should be ready for any kind of situation, my friend! Rope has many uses!" Virion replied proudly as he put away his spare rope.

"Ew…" I immediately stopped wanting to know about his rope.

"What?! Do not think my rope has caused lewd acts!" Virion looked unhappy, but I kept ignoring him.

Before I had to listen to Virion yell any longer, Robin spoke up, "Well it seems there's a bandit group near here. Seems like his bosses are interested in raiding the town we're heading too."

"He tell us where his leaders are?" I asked.

"In exchange that we let him go, yes," Robin informed us.

My blood was practically boiling when I heard that, "Let him go?! No chance! He's no good!"

"That may be, Vaike, however, finding his leaders is of the top concern currently. I'm ok with letting one bandit go to stop two bigger ones," Robin pulled out his sword and was heading back to the bandit tied to the tree.

I ran up behind him and grabbed his sword hand, "How do you even know his info's good? He could be lying to save his bosses. A bandit would sell ya his mother but you'll find out later the woman he sold ya wasn't even his mom!"

"He's already given me the information, Vaike. Would you have me go back on my word to let him go?" Robin looked at me seriously.

I grunted in annoyance before I gave in and let Robin's arm go. He then proceeded to cut the ropes tied around the bandit thus freeing him. The bald bandit stretched and cracked his neck as he walked away from the tree that held him. He gave me a mean glare and I responded by grabbing onto my axe's handle.

"Don't get your shorts all caught up. I told your little friend the truth. No sense in getting feisty," he told me as he finished cracking his knuckles.

"You'll have to excuse us if we don't fully believe the word of a brigand like yourself," Virion was surprisingly on my side I think.

"Suit yourself. I don't give a shit if you do or don't. I just want to get the hell out of here. Fighting you guys made me realize how fast I'll end up dead if I keep being a bandit and I don't want to be dead so fuck this. See ya, assholes," he started to walk back down the path he drove the stolen wagon down without looking back to us.

"Well, I think it was nice of him to turn over a new leaf," Lissa said from behind both me and Virion.

As I watched the bandit walk away, I released my hold on my axe, "Yeah, well I still don't trust the guy. And the Vaike usually trusts a lot of people."

"There's a lizard behind you, Lissa!" Robin panicked as he pointed towards the blonde girl behind me.

Lissa shrieked and bowled through both Virion and me. I let her run me over! After I could recover, Lissa was pouting at the laughing tactician.

"You lied again, Robin!" She was visibly upset.

"Oh, man! You should've seen your face! Oh, and the way you pushed over Virion and Vaike! Priceless!" Robin was slapping his knees he was laughing so hard.

"Don't think I won't get you back for this," Lissa silently said underneath the noise of our tactician's laughing.

/WWWW\

After our tactician recovered from his laughing fit, we followed the bandit's directions to where he informed us his leaders were hiding out. The directions lead us to a hill that had a good vantage point on the town we were heading to in the first place. An entire forest was in between us and the very town.

According to the bandit, his leaders were holding up at the bottom of the hill we were currently atop. Upon closer inspection, it seemed like he wasn't lying as there was a small encampment of bandits down below us. A good ten maybe even fifteen of them were in the camp and who knows how many were around it.

"Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen" Virion was counting out the bandits he could spot from our vantage point. He had good eyesight so we let him perform the task. Of course, the Vaike has the best eyesight of all and could've easily done the job better! I just let him do it is all.

"We have the high ground on them. Not that many ranged fighters on their side. Would their numbers be able to overwhelm us before then?" Robin was talking out loud as he tried to think of a plan.

Meanwhile, both Lissa and I were just supposed to watch the surroundings; including both our own and the camp.

"Just send the Vaike in! I'll handle it," I proudly stated to my team.

"We talked about this, Vaike," Lissa dully said from beside me causing my head to sag in disappointment.

A few more minutes of planning went by as we continued to watch the bandit camp. We spotted one individual bandit that looked highly different from the rest and even seemed like he was a commander of sorts. It was a big fellow that had a partial head of hair with armor that was easily better than the other bandits.

While we continued to watch the camp and devise a plan, a large explosion erupted in front of the camp shocking everyone. The entire bandit camp below us was in an uproar because of the explosion.

"What was that?!" Lissa asked.

"Did they blow themselves up?!" Robin also seemed shocked by the sudden event.

"Who cares!? Now's the best time to fight! Let's go with that one plan, Robin!" I shouted at my companions as I got ready with my axe.

"Which one?! Plan A? B? C? D? Oh, you mean Plan H! Well, then let's hurry!" Robin got his tome ready and started to rush down the hill.

Virion and Lissa were quick to follow behind him down the hill as another explosion erupted near the camp.

What could cause a bigger entrance than an explosion? A dual axe wielding Vaike!

I had taken the bandit's axe from before and decided now would be the best time to try it out with my own. Holding two axes was no problem for me! Even if it was kind of new to me.

I caught up to my teammates and we split off once we reached the camp. Shouts of panic took ahold of my attention.

"It's that craziest bitch! I told you she was fucking crazy! Now we're all dead!" A random voice shouted from inside the camp.

Even I want to know who this person is now.

Deciding to ponder on the mysterious person later, I hopped into the bandit camp with both of my large axes ready. Two of the bandits spotted me out quickly. None of them were ranged fighters as it seemed those bandits were firing at something else in the distance.

"Now who the hell are you?!" One of the bandits asked me with his sword drawn.

"Vaike here. Ready to show you why everyone calls him Ol' Teach," I grinned as I held up both of my axes.

"Ol… It's another fucking crazy person! Get him!" the bandit rushed towards me with his ally.

I was angered by his comment and braced myself for their attacks. When they got in range, I swung for one of their swords to deflect their blow as I dodged the second attack which was a thrust. With my left axe I swung down for the bandit on my left. He sidestepped the attack and I followed with a sidestep as well.

On my right, the other bandit tried a horizontal swipe for me to which I blocked with one of my axes before lobbing off his arm with my second axe. The bandit fell to the ground as his ally took a downward strike at me. I blocked the blow with both of my axes and used his sword as a lever to force him backwards to the ground. Then, I finished him off with a final attack.

My gaze then went to the front of the camp where a couple of archers were firing. None of my team should've gone around to the front so that must be the mysterious person these bandits are talking about. I ran behind the two archers and finished them both off simultaneously with a dual chop from both of my axes.

After dealing with them, I looked to where they had been firing. A woman with red hair wearing a load of red clothes that were accented with gold linings was fighting expertly with a few other bandits. Out of her hand flew a small circular object that exploded on one of the bandits as she took out the other with a sword.

Huh, she seems almost as good as me. She'll be fine!

Turning away from the front of the camp, I went to regroup with my friends that had gone to the back of it. I deftly outmaneuvered multiple other bandits, and I even took out a couple on the way. Of course that is to be expected.

After a short sprint to the back of the camp, I met up with my allies whom were engaged with a few bandits. Virion was firing off arrows to cover for himself and Lissa. Robin was in the middle of the battle fighting off a bandit. Even though the guy says he doesn't remember anything, he still fights almost as well as me!

I ran to my comrades in arms and intercepted a bandit that was trying to sneak up on Virion. After I sliced the bandit and incapacitated the man, Virion turned to face me whom I returned a wide grin to. Without responding to me, he fired off an arrow that whizzed by my ear. When I turned to see what he had shot, I saw another bandit lying on the ground behind me with an arrow in his chest.

Turning back to face Virion, we exchanged nods as I ran to the front with Robin whom had finished dispatching the bandit he was battling.

"Ya damn pieces o' garbage! If there's nothin' I hate more than empty pockets, its good doers like ya," An enraged voice shouted from in front of Robin and me.

We examined the shouter and found it was the man we presumed to be the leader of this camp. He had a bald head of hair with a few stray lines of hair running across his head along with his side being fully covered in hair. He had heavy metal colored slightly red covering certain key points of his body while the rest of his clothing appeared to be leather. In his right hand was a short axe that looked like it could cut through steel.

"Give up now or else this might not end well for you and your compatriots," Robin shouted back to the man as he aimed his sword straight for him.

The bandit leader spit to his side before giving us a smirk, "Give up? You lot must be misinformed. I'm Victor! There ain't a fighter out there that'll stop me an me brother!"

I hope his brother inherited better looks.

"Hey, I know what you're thinking! You think me brother's prettier than me! Well, that may be true, but the ladies love me!" He pointed towards himself with a wide grin. He then cocked his head to his side and noticed Lissa standing near to Virion.

"Well, if that ain't a pretty lady I ain't never seen. How about you ditch this lot and come with me and me brother?" He was beckoning Lissa over with his free hand. Lissa visibly gagged which merely enraged the bandit Victor. Meanwhile, Robin and I were practically dumbfounded by the way he was acting during a fight.

"Why you little- Hey, don't think I forgot about you two! I'll teach you why I was named Victor!" He raised his short axe and it seemed he was finally about to fight.

Another small explosion erupted behind both Robin and I as it would appear the red girl was still causing a ruckus. Without breaking concentration, we charged for the bandit together. Robin charged in for a stab which was deflected by the giant bandit's short axe. To follow up, I went for a slice with one of my axes, but it merely clanked off his heavy metal armor.

He laughed wildly in our faces and went for a wing on us. Just before he could, an arrow hit his axe just in time to throw his attack off course ever so slightly to miss both Robin and me. The two of us backed away from the giant Victor as I shot a smirk to the smiling Virion.

"Now ain't that cheatin' ya little buggers," Victor was practically boiling.

"Keep him busy, Vaike. I'll cover you with ranged support as well!" Robin had sheathed his sword and was now holding his yellow tome in hand as sparks flew off it.

"The Vaike's got this!" I ran towards Victor intending for a dual chop with both of my axes.

Victor was ready to intercept my attack so I changed my plan halfway. I rotated around the bandit and blocked one of his attacks with my axe and swung for him with my other. The attack connected soundly this time and managed to crack his armoring. I was overjoyed until I noticed something horrific. My axe was cracking under the pressure of the attack as well! The Vaike's axe was cracking! It's unbelievable!

Victor shot me a shit eating grin, "That's pretty lucky of me. Who woulda guessed I could be so lucky?"

It was only in that moment that I noticed something glowing on him. He had a small statue of what looked to be a goddess hanging off his belt. The statue was glowing a bright golden color.

Could that thing be doing somethin'?

As I was mesmerized by the glowing statue on Victor's belt, he took advantage of my opening and swung his axe into my side before deftly punching me in the gut. The punch had such power behind it that I was sent reeling back gasping for air.

Robin shot a bolt of electricity straight for Victor's head, but it narrowly missed him. At the same time, Lissa was attempting to heal my wound that I was losing blood from quickly. I had dropped the axe I plucked off the other bandits and was now only able to hold my cracked axe.

Victor was maniacally laughing as he dodged an attack from Robin's sword, "This all the lot of ya got?! Maybe I just need to find a better lot of would be followers with me brother!"

Victor kicked Robin and sent him flying through the air a good distance. With Robin out of his path, he turned to face the rest of us. Virion tried firing off an arrow for him, but he was able to luckily move out of the way in time. He came charging for me at about the same time Lissa finished healing my wound. The pain was still present but I willed my body to keep fighting.

He brought his short axe in for my side swiftly. I stumbled out of the way as he came towards me again with an overhead swing. My body stumbled again to the right, but he nicked into my leg which made movement nearly impossible at that point. He sent a punch for my face that connected cleanly. I tried to return a punch into his gut at roughly the same time, but mine had no effect it seemed. Another arrow was fired off by Virion, but it seemed like his body simply magically knew that it was coming as he ducked under it. From his lowered position he brought his axe up with him for the bottom of my jaw. I barely got my axe in the way of his in time.

The pressure from his blow shattered half of my axe and left me now with a one sided axe that looked like it would shatter from another blow.

"Say nighty night ya little bugger!" Victor had his axe raised up high to strike me with it.

I could only block this strike and then be left weaponless for the next. Every outcome of this battle left me as the loser.

Ol' Teach doesn't lose!

I let out a battle cry as I raised my own axe as well as my other arm. I gripped onto his axe arm to keep him from swinging down. As soon as I had grabbed onto his arm, I felt a warming presence cross over into my body from his. With my axe hand I swung for him similar to how he did to me. He grabbed onto my arm with his own and stopped my blow from connecting as well.

"You son of a-! Would ya just roll over and die already!?" He yelled directly into my face.

"Ol' Teach doesn't lose!" I yelled back at him as I went for a headbutt on him.

Our foreheads connected and the resulting impact hurt like hell. Nonetheless, he went for a knee after the headbutt. I ate

in my gut and returned another headbutt to him. The resulting blows could knock any normal person out, but I'm the Vaike!

As Victor and I battled it out for control, the warming presence I felt enter my body moments ago vanished just as suddenly. When I looked to where the statue had been on Victor's belt, it was now suddenly gone! An arrow had taken it off the tight rope he had used to tie it onto himself.

A morbid look glanced over Victor's face when he realized what had happened. Immediately thereafter, a bolt of electricity crashed into his side causing him to release me from the power struggle we were locked into. Just as I had control over my axe again, I swung into him for a killing blow. My axe shattered through his armor and into him before breaking off at the base.

"Brother, I… It's getting dark, brother… So, very very dark…" Victor let out his dying words as his eyes slowly closed.

The battle was over and we could finally relax. Lissa was quick to heal up any wounds we accumulated. The mysterious red woman also met up with us and started pillaging the camp for materials.

"Did you see how the Vaike beat that big guy?! I beat him with just one, count it, one axe! That's gotta be a record!" I exclaimed proudly to my companions.

"We helped, you know? Also, don't you usually use one axe anyways?" Lissa didn't look happy about my exclamations.

I tried to think about how many axes I usually use, but ultimately gave up halfway through.

"Speaking of axe, where's my other one?!" I panicked and tried finding my last axe.

"Hello, I would like to purchase that axe," Virion appeared to be making a deal with the red haired woman.

"Sure, that'll be 300 gold pieces!" The red haired woman stated happily while holding a familiar looking axe.

Virion gracefully accepted the axe after paying for it. He then turned to face me and I realized that the axe he was holding was the one I was looking for.

"Hey, that's mine!" I tried to grab it from him, but he dodged my swipe.

"Nonesense! I just purchased it from this elegant woman," Virion stated as he pointed to the red woman.

"You sold my axe?! You can't do that!" I shouted at her in anger.

"Sure I could! It was just lying around so I took it and sold it!" She stated to me with a smile as she held up the bag of coins Virion handed her.

"Virion, what do you want for it?!" I pleaded with him.

"But I just purchased it. I can't part ways with such an item so quickly," He looked over the axe as though he was examining it.

"Please!" I was on my knees begging at this point.

"Hm," He went into deep thought.

"Do not think of me as a pervert," he stated his price and I swiftly grabbed his hand for a handshake.

"Deal! Yes, yes! Now give me my axe!" I held out my hands in a beggar's fashion.

He gave me my axe back and I held it closely to me in a similar way that a mother would hold a child.

"Oh, thank the Gods," I had managed to calm down after regaining an axe into my hands.

By the time I ended the fiasco with Virion, Robin approached the red woman with a quizzical look.

"Are you Anna?" Robin asked the red woman.

"Hm? Of course I am! Who else do I look like?" The now supposedly Anna proclaimed joyfully with a bag of money in her hands.

"I'm sorry. I was just under the impression you were just a merchant not a fighter too," Robin was rubbing the back of his

head as he appeared to be embarrassed.

"When you're in my line of business you learn to do what's needed," Anna replied still smiling.

"So those explosions were yours? I didn't think such a feat was capable without magic," Robin seemed intrigued by how Anna fought.

"Oh, these? They're patented bombs made by yours truly! I like to call them Fiery Red Trickster Anna's Explosives! Or you could just call them bombs!" Anna was overly ecstatic as she held out the same circular objects I saw her toss around earlier.

"Uh, right. Hey, do you happen to have Ravenous Feroxian Lizard tongue?" Robin asked for the item we came all the way out here for.

"I'm sorry," Anna looked rather dejected and the rest of us fell in mood along with her.

"I'm sorry I have so many! How many would you like? Ten? I can give you a special deal if you buy ten!" Anna quickly picked back up in her mood as it seemed she was merely trying to mess with us.

Robin let out a fake laugh to the insane merchant in front of us that was holding a lizard's tongue, "How much?"

"One would cost you 500 hundred gold coins, but if you buy ten now I can give you them all for only 4000!" She was increasingly pushy in trying to sell us ten tongues all at once.

"N-No thanks. One will be fine," Robin carefully handed over a pouch of gold that Anna quickly snatched from him almost alike a thief.

Unlike a thief, however, she returned a tongue to us after confirming how many coins Robin handed her. After the purchase was made, Anna went on her way and we waved goodbye to her.

"Well, that was-" Robin stopped mid-sentence as he gained a strange look.

"Is something the matter, Robin?" Virion extended a hand to Robin, but quickly pulled back when the tactician erupted into strange movements.

"Itchy! Itchy! Itchy!" Robin shouted out as he started to run off scratching his back.

Behind him was the petite blonde holding a stick covered in ants on it. She dropped the stick and busted into laughter.

"Lissa, what did you do?!" Virion quickly tried to ask the princess that was uncontrollably laughing.

"I-I… I stuck a bunch of fire ants into his shirt!" She continued in her frenzy of laughter as Robin ran further and further away from us furiously scratching his back.

"Wait, doesn't he have the tongue?" I asked the others.

The sudden realization hit us all and we went rushing after Robin.

We need that tongue so I can fight Chrom again!

End of the chapter there!

Virion and Vaike have an interesting relationship. Since they can't actually support each other in the game, I figure there's a good reason for that. They wouldn't rightfully enjoy each other's company. Not at least right away.

As for bandits, they're kind of like the grunts of this world. Pretty easy to take on and their only strength is their numbers. Even that doesn't always help in the end. Real opponents for our heroes probably will crop up in the coming chapters.

Now, the statue on Victor was his goddess icon that you'd usually get when you beat him. My ruling on stat boosting items in the world is that they act more alike an accessory. They give their wearer their abilities until removed hence why Victor had such amazing luck. I'll have multiple rulings on other things to come but this is where I stand on stat boosting items.

So what did you think of the chapter? Did you like it? Maybe you hate it. Let me know in a review. Also, point out any

mistakes I might've made and I'll be quick to rectify them.

If you have any questions or ideas send them over with a PM.

We'll now be getting back to the tournament finally!

Chapter 12: Tournament of Fighters

Ding! Ding! Ding!

No, this isn't an alarm clock but instead another chapter! Rejoice you Saturday morning people! It's really early for me! I need to fix my sleep schedule! Yay!

Ok, less crazy. I just needed to get it out. So, how about that new Fire Emblem game? Hype? I'll be getting it when it comes out… As soon as I come across a leprechaun's gold pot that'll solve all of my money problems.

Continuing to be distracted aside, I'll randomly respond to a couple reviews! Why? Because this is how I operate.

llat-2: First off thanks for reviewing. Onto your latest review your right. I'll probably work both of them in the ways you described. These things will be working off rules, but I'll let the story divulge that information instead.

SilverFlameHaze: For you a fun fact. My first playthrough of the game involved me getting Vaike killed in Chapter four. Not even three full chapters and I got the poor guy murdered because I wasn't paying attention. It definitely made me focus on keeping everyone else alive though, haha. Only ever got to experience Vaike during my second run of the game.

Thanks to everyone else for reviewing! I still greatly appreciate them and hope you leave me more!

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Tournament of Fighters

Things never seem to get any easier for me as of late. My days seem to get piled up with more and more responsibilities. They're being filled by the one thing I would like the least of.

I keep getting more and more things to do while my free time slowly dies in a fire. Things like: time consuming training that leaves me winded afterwards, missions tasked onto me because I'm a Shepherd, and not to mention I'm apparently a champion for one of the khans here in Regna Ferox; which by the way is today.

Yeah, after we got back with the moondrip flower we had roughly two solid days until the tournament. Two days isn't a whole lot of time when you think about it. It's not like we could've eighties montaged it and gotten through some epic special training in that amount of time. No, instead all of our extra time was spent doing basic training meant to increase endurance above all else. Monotonous pushups, running, sit ups, etc. have filled most of my time during the last two days. Nothing too impressive.

Also, there's the fact of the matter that I'm still in Regna Ferox. I'm still in Regna Ferox. A place that about a week ago only existed in a video game to me. Somewhere I shouldn't be at all.

It would seem the previous jumps in between this world and my own whenever I slept have been severed. I'm certain Janus has done it purposely. I can see his reasoning to do so. You never let a lab rat out of its cage when doing tests on it, right? Then again, I can't tell why he kept jumping me between the worlds in the first place if he was just going to cut me off when I got nosy. Hell, I'll probably never understand a power hungry god. He's probably just doing it for the kicks.

On the plus side, we've secured all of Miriel's ingredients thanks to Frederick's group bringing in the last one just yesterday. The entire antidote was concocted in a flash and Chrom was treated with it equally as fast. His fever increased over the time we took to gather up the supplies. Supposedly he got into a couple small conversations surprisingly while our groups were running around but now it seems like he does nothing but sleep. It's a race against time now according to Miriel. There's nothing more we can do.

Quite frankly, however, none of the Shepherds seem to want to leave it up to fate to decide. Despite Miriel informing them otherwise, almost all of the Shepherds have been in and out of the room taking care of their captain. The only two not to do any such thing would have to be me and Vaike. Vaike is deliberately kept out of the room simply because he tries waking Chrom up to fight him whenever he does go in. I personally keep myself away from the whole turmoil because adding to my list of responsibilities would be nerve wrecking. Also, I wouldn't have the first idea on what to do with a bed ridden person anyhow.

Back to the present, currently I was sitting in the extravagant dining hall inside the castle. In front of me was the yellow

tome the bandit woman back in Donnel's hometown had. I was spending whatever free time I still had trying to understand what was written inside of it. Based on the fact it has similar lettering like the books I saw back in the Shepherd's HQ, I've come to conclude that those books were in fact magic tomes as well.

Holy crap, it's like I'm Sherlock Holmes. Alright, putting the joke book down.

I should've realized this much earlier when I noticed the display case for that old khan's axe had a plaque written in English unlike magic tomes. It only leads me to wonder why magical books are written in a seemingly different language in the first place. It just looks like a bunch of gibberish to me.

Maybe only inherently skilled magic users are able to decipher these. It would go hand in hand with how some characters back in the game could never be a magic user no matter what.

I'd ask Miriel if she could tell me what all this stuff meant, but she's been the priority caretaker for Chrom. I don't want to take her away from that. Still, a simple question couldn't take too much of her time, right? Arg! I should've been thinking about this stuff earlier! There's hardly even time to probably practice casting one spell! This sucks!

I slammed the book closed for possibly the fifth time this morning in a fit of rage. After settling out of some enraged hyperventilating, I rested my head on the table besides the book while placing both of my hands over my head.

There's an important tournament soon and all I can do is swing around a sword. Lucina will probably have a team of fighters just as good as her! We're finished!

As I was mentally punishing myself, a hand tapped my shoulder. I turned my head to see the person and recognized them immediately as Donnel. Strangely enough, he was holding a bow and a quiver of arrows.

"Doin' some readin' there?" He asked with a puzzled look.

"Trying to read is a better way to put it. This whole thing is filled with nonesense!" I slammed my fist on the front cover of the magic tome out of frustration.

Donnel recoiled a bit when I let out my anger, but recovered with a goofy grin somehow, "Well, shucks. Readin' is a bit of a tough one. Sometimes I find out that I've been readin' a book upside down like a bat would hangin' in a cave!"

"Reading it upsides down?" I had to hold back my urge to laugh.

Donnel wasn't one to do the same, however, as he jollily laughed despite it being about himself, "Yup, dern sure was embarrassin' when folks saw me doin' it too. Hey, maybe you've done it too."

"I highly doubt it," I reached towards the book and opened it once again. This time I flipped it around to read it like Donnel had suggested. It was still just as unreadable as before.

"Gosh. This thing must be harder to crack than a pickle jar," Donnel had attempted to read the book as well, but stopped when he couldn't read the first few lines either.

"Yeah… Say, what're you doing with the bow and arrows?" I pointed to the bow and quiver full of arrows he had in possession.

"This stuff? Well, I asked that Virion fella yesterday if he could show me how to shoot it! Should come mighty in handy!" He quickly struck a pose drawing the bow back with an arrow ready to fire off. Except, he was holding the arrow backwards and was going to send it flying backwards.

"Uh, yeah. Hey, why don't you go find him before you go pointing that thing around, alright?" I slowly had him point the bow down before he stopped pulling back on the string of the bow.

He didn't look nearly as enthusiastic as he did just seconds ago, but he quickly bounced back with a quick salute. He was still trying to hold onto the arrow so it thudded against his pot helmet when he did so.

"Right! He oughta be round these parts somewhere! Gosh, this place sure is big. Hello?" Donnel's voice trailed off as he walked down one of the many hallways to the castle.

I couldn't hold it in any longer, I had to start laughing. Falling back into my chair, I let it all flow out. The dining room was quickly filled with nothing but my laughter and the echoes of it afterwards. Soon enough, I manage to catch myself. It took a bit but I do finally come to a halt in my fit of laughter. As I slowly catch my breath, I turn myself back to face the magic tome on the large dining table.

Man, when was the last time I laughed like that? Before all of this probably. It's nice to-

Suddenly, I heard something like footsteps. It sounded like someone hastily running away from the dining hall. When I looked to the source of the noise, a bright color caught my eyes. There was a pink color that took off running down one of the hallways that enters into the dining room. It moved so fast that it almost looked like a blur.

Pink thing running away from me? I'm not a betting man, but I could probably safely bet on who the pink blur was. Huh… Wonder what she was doing.

"Vincent, the tournament's starting soon. We are to go to the tournament grounds immediately," Frederick announced his presence loudly in his shining armor behind me.

"Ugh, no need to shout in my ear there, big guy," I clasped my hand over my left ear as I collected my belongings and stood up.

Frederick almost always looked at me with a scowl at this point so when he did it again I wasn't exactly fazed. Instead, we both kind of silently stood there. Him scowling at me and me blankly staring back.

Finally, Frederick was the one to break the silence as he audibly sighed, "Come now. We shouldn't keep the others waiting on us."

"I'll follow wherever your shadow goes," I took up in following behind him like I said I would and we made our way to the tournament.

/WWWW\

First of all, let me be the first to say that I was expecting a much smaller coliseum. Maybe it was just me hoping for it to be small or maybe I really just wasn't expecting Regna Ferox's coliseum to be this huge. Scratch that. It was too big for the kind of tournament we were having if you asked me! Either way, I was now on the inside of a completely packed coliseum waiting in agonizing pain.

The constant murmuring of people above me, the loud announcer that would shout out to the crowd and get them riled up, the anticipation for the important fights; all of it had me sitting off edge.

Judging by the way the rest of my "team" was looking at me, they could tell as well.

"You have problems being in front of a crowd, Vincent?" Robin was the first to ask.

"Being in front of it? No. Just… the waiting that leads to being in front of one… That's what's killing me!" I finally snapped and was having a hard time controlling both my breathing and heartbeats.

As I fell into a panic attack, someone's palm slapped the back of my head. Of course it was Sully that had done so.

She was scowling at me as I held my head from the stinging pain she delivered it, "Stop flipping out already! You're supposed to be the leader in this thing so get it together or I'll put you together!"

"Right! Right! Just no more team hitting, alright?!" I tried to calm myself after Sully threatened me.

It didn't work too well, but it kept me from getting any more wallops from her.

"URGH! When is this thing starting?! The Vaike can't wait any longer!" Vaike was hoisting his axe over his head as he shouted directly up at the ceiling.

Oh, and he doesn't get hit!?

Without warning, Sully did, however, deliver a smack to the back of Vaike's head as well.

Well, I feel better now.

"Yeowch! Alright, fight on!" Vaike went into a fighting position when he realized Sully had struck him.

"You really want to do this, huh?" Sully was smirking as she reached for her lance she leaned against one of the walls in this room.

"Do not start this. We are to secure victory for milord and that's it," Frederick stepped in between the both of them.

"You want to go to, Fred? Ol' Teach accepts all challengers!" Vaike still wasn't backing down.

Frederick seemed heavily annoyed by being called anything but his full name. He gave Vaike the same scowl he gave me earlier when I didn't call him by his name.

Meanwhile, both Robin and I were standing on the other side of the room that this was all unfolding out in.

"Are you going to do something or should I?" I asked the tactician.

With a small sigh, Robin replied, "It might be best if they simply handle it."

Seconds before an all-out brawl broke out in our team, the gate entering into the center of the arena opened. A man stepped through it holding a feather, a bottle of ink, and a piece of paper. He entered with a confused look at what was occurring in front of him. More than half of the East Khan's team was going to knock each other out. Awkwardly, both Robin and I waved to the new man to grab his attention.

Surprisingly, the brawl that was about to occur stopped because it's partakers all looked at the new man.

"Um, do you have your lineup?" he asked us warily.

I looked to Robin expectantly. He informed me that he would have all the planning done and ready, but he never told me any of it.

"Yes, I figure we'll go with Frederick," he pointed towards Frederick and then towards Sully, "then Sully."

He pointed towards himself, "Then I, Robin," he followed it up by pointing towards Vaike, "after that is Vaike."

Vaike let out a loud shout of enjoyment even though I don't believe he realizes he's so close to last which apparently is me.

Robin finished by pointing at me, "Finally is the East Khan's champion Vincent."

The man that had just entered was carefully writing all of our name's down in order. When he was finished, he looked back at us and nodded in confirmation.

"Good! We'll be starting here shortly! Remember, to stick around for your round or else you could forfeit your match," he then exited back out the gate he entered in a hurry.

"So our hardest hitters are going first?" I asked Robin after the man had left.

"That they are. Don't worry. I've got it all worked out," he smugly smiled to me and the rest.

I returned a smile, "No, I'm not worried. I like the idea."

He kept me at the back! I definitely like this plan!

"And now, ladies and gentleman, it's time to get this tournament under way!" the same announcer's voice boomed into the crowd of the coliseum. This is in a world with no kind of noise enhancement devices or even magic. That guy has to have just a naturally booming voice to be able to get the entire crowd's attention.

At the signal of the start of the tourney, the entire crowd above erupted into applause and cheers.

"Starting things off will be two fierce competitors! Frederick fighting for the East Khan's champion and Roule fighting for the West Khan's champion!" the announcer stood in the direct center of the arena and made motions for people to open the respective gates of each fighter.

At the call of his name, Frederick grabbed a sword that was hanging inside of the room we were currently in and made his way out the gate. The gate closed behind him and the rest of our group crowded around it to watch the battle that was going to unfold.

/\/\/\/\/\

With sword in hand, Frederick approached the announcer in the center of the arena. His opponent, Roule, did the same.

Frederick's boots kicked up parts of the dirt floored arena as he marched through it. Eyeing around himself, he could see that the stadium was definitely packed to the brim with people like it sounded. The audience murmured in silence as he

walked through the arena.

In the front row on opposite sides of each other were the two khans Basillo and Flavia. Basillo was a dark man with golden armor that looked fitting only for a ruler. Any Feroxian would instantly be able to pick him out of a crowd because of it. Around the neckline of the armor was a massive amount of fur that almost seemed to be more for show rather than temperature control. On his back he held his signature weapon the axe that he was known to have used in order to slice down more than his fair share of enemies. He also had an eye patch covering his left eye; whether it was from a battle wound or something else was unknown.

Both of the khans were leaning up against the railing as it seemed they wanted to be as close to the action as possible.

When both competitors reached the announcer they stopped and eyed each other.

They seemed to look almost like polar opposites. While Frederick was heavily armored and tried to look as respectable as humanly possible, his opponent Roule did not try the same. Roule had a scraggily brown beard and greased hair with no rhyme or reason for how it looked. He wore decent enough leather armor but it looked like it was incredibly battle damaged as there were cuts and tears all across it. Quite frankly, it was amazing that it was still altogether. In his hand was a sword equal in length to Frederick's but it seemed to be his personal one with bits of it chipped off of it.

Roule glared at Frederick like a mad dog. Sensing the already growing tension, the announcer tried going over the rules as fast as possible, "Alright, this isn't a death match. It's until you either surrender or can no longer fight. If we deem it necessary, we can stop the fight at any point and declare a winner. No attempts at your opponent's life, ok? You will be charged normally if you purposely murder the other fighter. Got it?"

The fighters nodded in understanding before holding their swords up ready for a fight.

"Then to the best go the spoils!" The announcer ran to the side of the arena and held up his hand.

"Ready? Begin!" He swung his hand down signaling the start of the match causing the crowd to go into an uproar.

Both fighters immediately started to circle each other. Roule was much more eager to get into combat than Frederick as he started to feign swings for him. Frederick, however, was no rookie when it came to swordplay. He didn't pursue the obvious feigns and instead kept his cool.

Grunting in frustration that Frederick wasn't falling for his tricks, Roule decided to be the first to go in for a strike. He kept his distance and went for an upward cross swing on the knight in front of him.

The swing, however, was hardly in a dangerous reach of Frederick. Instead of parrying off the blade, all he had to do was back pedal merely a foot in order to dodge.

With Frederick already opting to go on the retreat, Roule took a step forward in pursuit during his strike. At the end of his sword's swing he changed the trajectory of it and made a horizontal swipe for Frederick.

There was hardly the time to dodge the blow this time for the armored knight. This strike would have to be parried or at the very least blocked. In the blink of an eye, Frederick made his decision and parried off the blow. Using his blade he let Roule's sword slide along it and changed the path of the sword on his own. Roule's sword ended up going up and over Frederick rather than into.

Now with his opponent's sword and balance thrown off, Frederick wanted to make a move of his own. Taking the opportunity, he swung his sword for his opponent's shoulder knowing that he should avoid killing blows. Going for such an attack didn't lend any results, however. Had Frederick gone for a much more crippling attack he would've landed it, but since he went for the shoulder Roule had time to get out of the way.

The entire crowd roared in excitement at how the battle was still ongoing. The khans watched with glee as well from their front row spots.

Seeing on how precise Frederick was fighting, Roule had to think of a plan and fast. He wouldn't stand a chance if his opponent was the one dictating the flow of the battle.

The two opponents began circling each other once more similarly to how they began the battle. Both of them waited eagerly for the other to strike first.

Spinning his sword around in his hand a few times, Roule shot a small smirk to Frederick. Gripping his sword with both of his hands he charged into Frederick's guard. He made a swing for Frederick that was ready to be blocked. Rather than clash their blades together, their swords made very brief contact as Roule pulled his back to go for a swipe from a

different side. Again Frederick was lightning fast to get his weapon in the way to defend himself. Their blades clash once more only for but a second.

Frederick was sent backpedaling as he was being forced to defend against the onslaught of swift blows being hailed at him. His calm and precise nature was being taken advantage of by rash attacks.

Still, the knight kept his cool even when the crowd had shifted to cheering for his opponent. He still had to win the battle. He would win it for Chrom, Lissa, Emmeryn, and even for the rest of the Shepherds. If he failed now, he wouldn't be able to continue calling himself a knight.

With his opponent nearing the end of his stamina, Frederick watched carefully for weak points. A stray swipe from Roule caught against Frederick's armor and nicked into his body drawing blood. Still, Frederick waited patiently for his counter attack. Another blow came raining down towards him too fast to block or dodge. It dived into the armor of his shoulder causing another small wound. The crowd was going wild. Still the great knight waited for an opening.

Another swing came blazing towards Frederick's side. This time he was certain that he could make his move. He intercepted Roule's sword with his own and deflected it upwards. Roule's sword went flying out of his hand and landed a couple of feet to his side. His lack of stamina coupled with how rashly he was fighting left him paying very little attention to his grip on his own weapon playing towards his downfall.

The crowd fell completely silent at the sudden turn in the battle.

Frederick then pointed his sword for Roule, "I do believe this is when you surrender."

Roule raised both of his hands slowly. When they were completely over his head, the announcer caught the surrender, "Then we have a winner! The first point goes to the East Khan's champion!"

At the signal of the battle's winner, the crowd erupted into applause and whistles. They were overly ecstatic for Frederick's win. Meanwhile, Flavia was grinning madly at how she had stolen the first point while Basillo didn't look nearly as pleased.

After politely bowing in acceptance to the crowd's applause, Frederick returned to the rest of his team.

"Way to go, Frederick!" Robin happily cheered for the knight as he entered back through the gate.

"Yes, I've secured the first win for us. It was… slightly painful," Frederick grimaced at his few wounds and broken armor.

"Ah, right! I'll go grab Lissa for you!" Robin hurried off to find Lissa whom should be in attendance in the stands.

In the meantime, Vaike was busy punching a practice dummy, "Argh! When's it going to be my turn!?"

"And now for our next challengers!" the announcer was back to the middle of the arena.

Vaike perked up at this and was waiting eagerly to hear who was up next.

"It's not going to be you," Vincent was silently chuckling to himself on how Vaike was acting.

"Next up is Sully fighting for the East Khan and Imania fighting for the West Khan!" the crowd started applauding as the gates to both of the teams were opened.

Vaike grabbed Vincent by the shirt, "How did you know it wasn't me?! Are you a psychic!?"

"No! There was a list! A list" Vincent tried reasoning with the bull headed Vaike as he was shaken senseless.

"Finally, I've been waiting for my match for the past five days!" Sully cracked her neck as she hefted up her lance.

Similarly to before, both of the opponents approached the announcer and went over the very simple rules. When they acknowledged the rules, the announcer quickly made his way out of their way.

Sully stared down her opponent in front of her. Imania was a girl shorter than Sully with shoulder length blonde hair. She wore completely white robes and a black garb underneath them. In one of her hands seemed to be a red book with a flame on the cover of it.

"Well, here's to a good match," Sully extended her hand for a handshake.

Imania looked down to Sully's hand before returning her gaze back to the smirking Sully.

Imania extended her hand slowly towards Sully's, "Well, aren't you friendly?"

"Ah, to hell with friendliness! Fighters in a one on one battle should just show respect for each other, you know?" Sully grinned as she waited for Imania to shake her hand.

"Well, that's nice to hear," Imania stopped moving her hand towards Sully's and pulled it back. She then quickly formed a scowl across her face, "Because I hadn't planned on showing any friendliness or respect to filth."

Sully's grin quickly subsided, but she then smirked as she spun her lance around pointing it towards Imania, "Oh, I will so enjoy kicking your butt all across this stadium."

"I would LOVE to see an inferior being such as you even attempt that," Imania opened her book and started to form a ball of fire in her hand.

"Well, things are already getting heated! Let's stop wasting time! Ready? Begin!" The announcer didn't wait any longer to signal the start of the second match.

Imania wasted no time in firing off the fireball she had already formed straight for Sully's head. At practically point blank range there wasn't much time to do anything other than take the attack. So, Sully whirled around her lance as the fireball collided into it sending flames scattering off around her.

With her opponent relying only on magic, Sully went straight in to attack her. Imania, however, was quicker than she appeared. The mage dodged out of the way avoiding getting skewered by Sully's lance as she readied another spell. She held another ball of flame in her hand as she increased the distance between her and Sully.

Sully wasted no time in pursuing her enemy. She went into a full blown sprint after the retreating mage. With her lance ready, Sully swung for Imania during the chase. Imania ducked under the attack and let loose her second fireball. The flaming orb came crashing down next to Sully but only left scorch marks across her armor.

Keeping up with the chase, Sully aimed instead for her opponent's legs to try and trip her. Imania hopped over the lance and fired off a smaller fireball than her last two just to slow down Sully. The attack connected with Sully's leg causing her to halt in the chase. Imania smirked as she put more and more distance between Sully. Imania then prepared another spell. This time she intended to do some serious damage as she had plenty of time to concentrate.

Noticing the unusually large fireball in Imania's hand, Sully knew that it spelt bad news for her if she got struck by it.

"Proper filth like you should just be burnt," Imania sent a smile to Sully as the fire in her hand grew to an even larger size.

"Oh? Then are you gonna cast that spell on yourself later too?" Sully smirked as she loosened up her muscles to dodge the spell.

The spell in Imania's hand started to distort in form as she scowled ferociously at Sully's comment. Sparks of fire went scattering to her sides as she struggled to keep the overall spell in a solid shape.

"W-Why you-!? Burn!" Imania let go of the large fireball and sent it hurling straight at her opponent.

Sully surprised the audience in the crowd by going into a charge for the fireball as well. The size of the flaming orb was at least her entire body size maybe even bigger. Its speed was no joke either. Sully would have at least a few seconds to make a dodge, but she was cutting this time shorter by running straight for the attack. At this point she would only be able to dodge maybe just by a hair if she was lucky.

The entire stadium was full of gasps. Almost the entire audience was standing up to catch the full moment of what was going to occur.

As Sully got only a few feet away from the fireball, she had to make a choice. It was sink or swim time. The radiating heat of the attack could be felt as she neared it. Deciding now, Sully wanted to swim.

She took her lance and stabed the end of its blade into the dirt of the arena. As her pole started to line up parallel with her body, she leaped up and pushed off her weapon. She pole vaulted up and over the fireball as it connected with her lance she left behind. The resulting explosion of the spell caused Sully to fly maybe a bit too much further than she intended but she landed into a roll just a few feet away from Imania.

Recovering from her jump, Sully got up and sent a high kick for Imania. For a few seconds, Imania was shocked. She shook herself from the momentary weakness and ducked under Sully's kick just in the nick of time.

"You're a nimble one aren't ya?" Sully raised both of her fists up in front of her face.

"And you a stubborn one," Imania grunted as she dodged one of Sully's straight jabs.

Imania spotted Sully going for a gut punch and went to block. She, however, didn't realize she was holding her tome in front of her. Sully saw the opening and pulled back her punch and kicked Imania's tome up and out of her hands sending it flying away from the both of them.

Now being unarmed as well, Imania raised her fists to continue fighting, "To think I'd be forced into such barbarianism."

Sully laughed as she went for an uppercut that Imania dodged, "Barbarianism?! Listen, missy, a good fist fight might teach you to be more respectful."

Imania huffed in anger and grabbed one of Sully's straight jabs. She then shot a right hook for Sully that connected on her head.

Sully recoiled from the attack, but managed to keep it together and sent a knee into Imania's gut knocking the air out of her. The mage latched onto Sully's leg before she could pull it away, however, and started to lift it up to throw her off her feet. Catching onto the idea, Sully focused on keeping her balance while trying to free her leg.

When Sully started to struggle, Imania let go of her leg to ensure that she would throw herself off balance. The plan worked slightly as Sully barely managed to catch herself before she fell. When she looked back to where Imania had been, she saw that the mage was making a run for her spell book.

Sully pursued close behind Imania and tackled her to the ground just a couple of feet before the book. She got off of Imania and back into a fighting stance. The red haired knight stood in between Imania and her spell book before kicking it further away.

Waving her hand a few times she beckoned for Imania to get up, "Come on. A fight shouldn't be fought on the ground."

Imania got up slowly with a burning anger in her eyes as she raised her fists again, "You simpleton. I'll teach you not to disgrace me with your pity."

Both of the fighters sounded like they were running on fumes. The next good hit could end the fight for either of them.

A stray jab came flying for Imania that she weakly dodged. The mage tried to return the attack, but Sully narrowly dodged as well. Imania then sent a kick into Sully's rib cage that forced her to stumble. Recovering from the shock, Sully hit Imania with a quick gut punch staggering her.

The crowd couldn't believe what they were seeing. This was the kind of fight they had hoped for. An all-out struggle between two fighters that would truly show who was the strongest of the two. Needless to say, the crowd was losing their minds.

Feeling the exhaustion weighing them down, both fighters went for a heavy hit on the other. Sully sent a right hook for Imania's head while the mage sent her left leg for a high kick on Sully's head.

Neither of them cared or had the energy to dodge the other's attack. Both strikes connected and sent each of the competitors stumbling away. Their vision had gotten blurry from the blows they both received and they struggled to even stay focused.

The officials of the battle watched intensely as they were waiting to see who would be the first to fall. Whoever fell first would be the loser while the other would be the winner.

Stumbling back and forth, Sully felt her legs and eyesight giving out on her. She tried to focus all of her attention on standing. As her vision faded she caught Imania falling. Then she saw nothing but darkness.

Just seconds before Imania fell completely, she caught herself barely by throwing out both of her hands in front of her. Sully, on the other hand, tumbled backwards and crashed flat against the ground out cold.

"There's the second winner everyone! It's Imania! Second point goes to the West Khan! Score: 1-1!" The announcer ran to Imania's side and supported her to show off the second match's winner.

Meanwhile, Sully had to be placed onto a makeshift stretcher and hauled immediately out and into the infirmary. Her team wasn't feeling the same joy the crowd was.

Imania was placed onto a makeshift stretcher as well and taken out the same way as Sully.

Back with the East Khan's team, the four remaining were surprisingly quiet after Sully's declared loss. Robin and Vincent had taken to sitting down on a wooden bench while Frederick sat across from them.

The great knight removed all of his armor and was only wearing his suit he always kept on underneath. He looked to be heavily inspecting the cracks in his armor probably thinking of repairs for it later.

Vaike continued to beat on the poor practice dummy that was almost completely broken. His practice fighting seemed like it was wearing him out or maybe he was simply breathing heavily on purpose.

Lissa was down in the waiting area as well as Donnel whom followed her down when Robin grabbed her. The two of them seemed to feel the serious tension filling the air around the others.

"Care to stop?" Vincent shifted his gaze over to Vaike who had just punched the head off of the dummy he was mercilessly beating.

For a second Vaike considered hitting the dummy again, but instead huffed in anger and leaned against a wall. He slid down the wall until he was in a seated position with his arms crossed.

"You're up next, right?" Vaike turned his head to look at Robin.

"Yeah… I was just… thinking," Robin held both of his hands together in front of his face. He looked like he was in deep thought.

"Come on, guys! There's still three more matches! We'll win this!" Lissa had gotten up and put on her best cheerful face.

Donnel grinned as well when Lissa turned the pep on. The others in the room gazed at the both of them for a second before returning back to a more serious atmosphere.

Lissa pouted and wanted to start whacking each and every one of them with her staff, but Donnel managed to hold her back.

"H-Hey, why not try readin' that book, Vince? That'll clear your head!" Donnel grabbed a yellow thunder tome and held it in front of Vincent.

Vincent eyed it for a brief second before taking it out of Donnel's hands. He opened it and noticed the first few pages of the book were blank. He shook his head before handing it back to Donnel, "This isn't my book, Donny."

"Sorry, I think that's mine. Here, I think this one was yours, right?" Robin had gotten up to trade the yellow tome he was holding in his possession.

"Now, for the third match of the day! Everybody give a big round of applause for our next combatants! On the East Khan's side is Robin!" the announcer was doing a phenomenal job at pumping up the crowd around him.

A slow cog in Vincent's mind had started to turn while he slowly traded books with Robin.

"*W-Wait, he's a mage,"* Vincent thought to himself as he came to the sudden realization watching Robin take the book from his hands.

"You can read this stuff, right?" Vincent's eyes looked like they were ready to fall out of his head.

"Huh? Of course. How else would I be able to cast the spells?" Robin was heading towards the gate when he stopped momentarily to regard Vincent.

"T-Then can you teach me the language? Just tell me one line before you go out there!" Vincent had gotten up from his seat to catch up to Robin.

"Well, I mean it's another language so…," Robin turned his head as he heard the gate being slowly opened.

"And on the West Khan's side is the old no longer undefeated champion, Lon'qu!" the gates to both the teams finished opening as the announcer gave out the last name.

"Just tell me what does this say," Vincent traced under a line in the book with his finger.

Robin laughed and walked backwards out the gate, "You're first problem is you're reading it backwards. I'll teach you it

afterwards if you'd like."

The gates closed in between the two of them and Robin turned around to head towards the announcer. With book still open in hand, Vincent stood perplexed at what Robin had informed him.

"*I'm reading it… backwards?"* Vincent's eyes fell down towards the book in his hands while the third match was about to begin.

Marching towards each other, both Robin and Lon'qu met with the announcer of the arena standing between them. Lon'qu had slightly spiked black hair and always held a katana on his side. His clothing was starkly different than other Feroxians and yet still seemed fit for the cold nipping weather. He wore a long blue coat that fell down to heels on his backside. The coat had short sleeves with fur cuffs to help with the frosty climate. He had two red straps wrapped around his gut and his boots also had fur cuffs around the top of them while his pants were white.

The rules passed into both of the contestants heads and they silently agreed to them. With the announcer no longer in between them, Robin extended his hand to Lon'qu in a similar fashion that Sully did to Imania.

"To a fair match," Robin smiled as he held his hand to Lon'qu.

Eyeing Robin's hand for a few seconds Lon'qu finally accepted it, "Respectable. I will try to make this a quick loss for you."

A small bead of sweat fell down Robin's forehead as he awkwardly retracted his hand from Lon'qu.

"Now it's time for the third match of the day! Ready? Fight!" a loud explosion of energy surged forward from the crowd as they got pumped to see another fight.

Both contestants slowly drew their weapons with excellent precision. Lon'qu drew his katana, and Robin, his sword and magic tome in either hand. They fell into combative stances and stared at each other for what felt like minutes.

Inevitably, an attack was fired off from Robin. He shot a bolt of electricity for Lon'qu to gauge his abilities. Anticipating the attack before it was even launched, Lon'qu had already guessed he should dodge to his left which was towards Robin's sword hand.

Robin winced after watching how fast Lon'qu dodged his attack. He knew he would be fast, but not that fast!

"*Ok, ok. Think of a plan. Thinking of a plan… Wishing I was still playing chess… Oh, gods!"* Robin barely managed to bring his sword up in order to defend himself from Lon'qu's incoming katana.

The katana wielder wasted no time in making a hasty retreat after failing his first strike. He already had his strategy down pat in his head. Get in for a strike. If you miss, fall back and wait. When you see an opening, head in for another strike. Rinse and repeat.

Robin, on the other hand, was still busy formulating one. He could certainly play the ranged game, but his opponent has already proven capable of dealing with that. He also wasn't much of a person to "judge a book by its cover", but he could bet Lon'qu outmatched him in swordplay.

Such is the woes for a tactician when you have too many options and not enough solutions. He fired off another bolt from his tome. The trajectory and power was exactly the same as the last and Lon'qu followed by dodging in the same manner as before. Lon'qu then started to charge for Robin.

Already remembering that a katana was going to be swung at him, Robin waited in anticipation. He dodged to the side as Lon'qu brought his katana up to swipe across his chest. Then, the tactician blocked an incoming horizontal swipe with his sword. As Lon'qu retracted his blade he noticed Robin charging a spell from his tome in his other hand.

Dodging back, Lon'qu kept his eyes fixated on the magical book radiating with sparks. A much larger bolt of energy shot towards Lon'qu. Once again, he dodged towards Robin's right but only barely. He moved into Robin's guard not wanting to let him get off another spell like the last.

As Lon'qu approached with his katana overhead, Robin raised his sword to defend himself. The attack turned out to be a fake as Lon'qu quickly shifted his attack to a horizontal swipe. Robin barely managed to step back in time as the katana cut through part of his clothing. Not letting up in his assault, the former champion lunged forward with his katana. Robin managed to get his sword to force Lon'qu's off path even if just a little. The katana meant for Robin's gut grazed past his side leaving an incision as it went past.

Not enjoying his odds being this close to his opponent, Robin fired off a quickly charged spell in between the two of them. The spell kicked up a poof of dirt that momentarily covered both of their eyesight.

Using the opportunity he provided himself, Robin in the opposite direction of his foe.

"*Just a little more… I've almost got it!"* Robin grunted in pain from his wound as he turned back around to see Lon'qu starting in pursuit of him.

Taking in a deep breath, he charged another spell. Not wasting a second, he shot the attack for Lon'qu who dodged to the side he always did. Unlike all the other times, however, another spell was being shot for him after he dodged. Noticing the path of the second spell, Lon'qu stopped in his tracks to avoid getting struck by lightning as it were. The spell crashed into the ground a couple of feet in front of Lon'qu causing a poof of dirt to fly up in front of him again blinding his sight of Robin.

Trying to quickly wave away the cloud of dust, Lon'qu was eager to be able to see again. With a couple of quick waves, he parted some of the cloud just in time to see Robin a few feet away from him charging towards him. Startled by the change in the battle, Lon'qu got ready to block. It was a second too late though. Robin impaled his sword through Lon'qu's lower abdomen and quickly retracted it.

Breathing heavily from exhaustion, Robin dropped his sword and tome to support the falling Lon'qu. He slung Lon'qu's arm over his shoulder to keep him from falling.

The announcer wasted no time in performing his job, "There you have it! Robin is the third match's winner!"

A long drawn out applause came out from the crowd. Possibly even more than the last two winners since Robin was helping an injured Feroxian.

As Lon'qu clutched his wound, his eyebrows furrowed, "I lost… again?"

Noticing Lon'qu's disappointment, Robin interjected as he carried him towards a team of medics, "Uh… Just… try not to stick to the same pattern. It was easy to guess you would run to my right after a bit."

Lon'qu stared at the white haired man that was supporting him across the arena, "Hmph… Perhaps."

"Things are getting heated aren't they?! The score stands 2-1 with the East Khan in the lead! We'll be taking a short break so please enjoy the halftime entertainment!" the halftime of the tournament was starting. A short break was being given in between the fights to let the crowd unwind after watching back to back fights.

In the meantime, a certain person was discovering how deceptively simple a "different" language was, "Ow! Son of a-! It's like a million needles running down your arm!"

Done and done.

Fights, fights, and more fights! I can't begin to explain how long I spent thinking about these fights. I had set goals in mind, but some things change when you start actually writing out things. Original scripting dictated Robin would lose, but going into the fight I remembered he's a clever little bugger that would more than likely win even though Lon'qu probably outmatches him in terms of skill (Literally).

Funny thing involving the tomes. I actually wanted ALL writing to look differently than English. It's another dimension and all that jazz. Although they may speak English, an a could've looked like a 2. However, past me a couple months ago screwed up with that damn axe in the display case. Past me wanted to sprinkle a teensy tiny bit of history and ended up screwing everything up. I'm not about to rewrite that small bit either nor this simply because of it. I'll instead go along with my mistake. So now, I am going with a different approach of the writing in the tomes.

Anyways, I'm far too tired for this. Leave a review for what you liked/disliked or if I made some sort of error. Also send over a PM if you have any ideas/questions.

Chapter 13: The Weak shall Fight the Strong

Speedy update. It was much easier writing this chapter. I could've probably done it in my sleep! Hope you readers like it.

Italics will be character's thoughts and /WWWW\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

The Weak shall Fight the Strong

"Watch where you're aiming!" Lissa had ducked behind Donnel in order to avoid a spell that I accidently shot in her direction.

I bowed apologetically to her, "Sorry, sorry!"

I couldn't quite believe what was happening. I was firing off bolts of lightning! Me; a spell caster! To think that each word in the book was merely spelt backwards. It would've been easier to notice had the lettering not been written in such a fancy form of cursive. It took me almost half of Robin's match to understand two words!

Still, I'm starting to understand the form of the lettering now. I can almost tell a t from an f now.

Although it doesn't seem like it's quite as simple as just reading off a few words. The real problem comes from the spell itself. I had momentarily thought about stepping in Lissa and Donnel's direction and the energy shot right off my arm straight towards them.

Looking back at my thunder tome, I noticed the line I read off was now completely gone from the page. Where ink previously stained the page it was now completely devoid. It was as though nobody ever wrote there in the first place.

That explains why Robin's tome is so empty. There's very few sentences on each page in this thing.

I went back to read a second sentence from the book. I stumbled on a few of the words, but managed to get through it. The sentence looked something like: !rednuht, snialp eht ssorca yruf eniht hsaelnu dna evoba seiks eht morf nwod hsarc

Each word was arranged backwards with the sentence beginning at the end. After rearranging it would say: Crash down from the skies above and unleash thine fury across the plains, thunder!

Reading the words off in my head, the text on the page began to shine. Shortly after, electricity started to spark all across the book. I was used to this after seeing it the first time. It's the next parts that were tricky. Focusing as hard as I could, I tried to make the electricity move towards my open palm.

It followed my course and ran down along my arm. It stung a bit as I was shocked repeatedly. My arm twitched from the electricity and some of the nerve cells in my arm fell numb because of the new energy. Slowly the spell's energy collected at the palm of my hand. It was a new record for sure. Of course, I've only cast two spells and the last one discharged towards Lissa. Still, I was ecstatic!

As I marveled at what I managed to accomplish the gate into our waiting area opened. The sudden noise caused me to shift in how I was standing to see the gate. I looked to see who was entering in and briefly took my eyes off the spell I had conjured in my open palm. When I had done so, the electricity I focused so hard on collecting into my hand darted towards the gate.

Crap! I didn't mean to-

"Watch out!" I cried out at the last second as the person entering into out waiting area stumbled past the spell I shot at them.

"I guess you don't need me after all," the person said as they entered into our area after dusting themselves off first.

For a moment I was too caught up in order to notice that it was Robin entering back into our area. He had white bandages wrapped around his side that seemed to have had some blood on them.

I take it he was cut during the fight. Still can't believe he beat Lon'qu. I thought we would have to have Lissa <u>accidently</u> stumble into the ring.

Lissa pursed her lips as she eyed Robin entering, "You could've come to me and I would've healed you."

Robin chuckled as he sat down on one of the benches, "They wouldn't let me leave until they did this. Still, you can help speed along the process. Come. Sfit."

He patted the bench with one of his hands as he clutched where his wound was with the other.

Lissa did as Robin suggested and grabbed her staff to sit on the bench with him. When she sat down, there was a long, sloppy sounding, fart that resonated through our waiting room. The little princess blushed profusely when all eyes were drawn towards her.

"Um, Lissa?" I had started to question the girl but she waved her hands frantically in the air to stop me.

"It wasn't me! Honest! I would never-!" She was trying her utmost to defend herself but stopped midway when she noticed Robin silently laughing to himself.

"Wow, I didn't expect you to be such a flatulent princess, Lissa. What's the matter? Had too many beans last night?" Robin's face was turning red from how hard he wanted to laugh. His face was cracking as he tried to hold it in for as long as he could. Eventually, he did crack and started to full on chuckle.

I couldn't tell on whether or not Lissa was still embarrassed or incredibly pissed now with how red she was getting. The answer was given to me though. She went directly behind the hysterical tactician and grabbed both of his ears.

She started to pull on both of his ears incredibly hard, "Don't do that ever again!"

"Ow, ow! Ok, I'm sorry! Please, stop! Ow!" Robin struggled against the girl behind him but it didn't seem like he was getting the upper hand anytime soon.

As the two of them wrestled, I eyed the spot Lissa sat down on.

A legitimate whoopee cushion… Didn't think those would be around.

I looked back at Lissa and Robin whom were still fighting. Lissa had put Robin into a headlock and was giving him a noogie. Honestly I couldn't call it a fight. It was more like a beating and it was obvious who was getting it.

I chuckled to myself as the two of them continued in the brawl before finally settling down because of Frederick.

"Now, give a warm welcome for tonight's entertainment!" an entourage of people had entered into the arena with almost all of them carrying some sort of musical instrument. The crowd gave a moderate response to the band entering. It was obvious the land of warrior's citizens enjoy watching fights a lot more.

Of course, I was thinking that until a woman with pink hair shyly walked in front of the large band. The crowd went mad with applause for her causing the woman to shrink back for a moment before finally moving ahead again.

I recognized the girl. Even if she was a fair distance away, I could still make out what she looked like. It was Olivia indefinitely. She had long pink hair tied back into a ponytail while she also had two braided strands of hair hanging in the front. Her arms and legs looked like they were covered by some kind of black veil. All across her outfit she wore golden accessories ranging from armbands to wristbands with a ring that had a few spikes along it and a cloth that attached both rings on her wrists. The rest of what she was wearing looked to be white and she had a headband on her head of course.

It still surprised me to see that she was wearing the same outfit she was in the game. It didn't look cold proof then and it still doesn't look cold proof now. I can't imagine how she manages to handle the cold weather around here. A small breeze sends shivers across my body around here.

Still, she looked like a dancer I suppose. That's what she does so I guess an outfit is meant to match.

Olivia looked extremely nervous. She kept looking around herself while she held both of her hands in front of her slowly turning red face.

So I guess she must feel normal…

Suddenly the band kicked themselves into gear. I couldn't recognize the song they were playing at first, but eventually it started to sound familiar. Normally I can't be bothered to remember most songs but this time it stuck out to me. It stuck out because it was so closely related to the world I was currently in. It had to be the title theme for Fire Emblem

Awakening.

Slowly but surely, Olivia started in her dance to the music. It was oddly majestic even to a guy that doesn't care about dancing like me. Watching her dance made me feel energized and happy. I had to keep watching and so did everyone else.

Is this what a dancer can do?

Olivia danced through a few songs that all used to be a part of the game. Her face increased in redness as she continued through her dances. Someone might've mistaken her for a tomato if she was in a garden.

Eventually the show ended and Olivia respectfully waited for everyone to end in their applause for her. As soon as it ended, however, she made off as fast as her feet would carry her.

Donnel whistled from beside me and threw his hands behind his head, "Wow, never did think I'd be able to watch somethin' like that! Dern sure was entertainin'!"

"Yeah, I'm feeling way more energized. How about you, Vaike? Uh… Vaike?" I scanned the waiting area slowly to find Vaike. He was nowhere to be seen.

"Where did he go!?" I didn't like not seeing Vaike in the area. His match was up next and he could potentially just forfeit it if he isn't here.

All of a sudden, there was loud snoring. The noise was coming from behind a couple of large boxes. Everyone looked at them and I approached them. Looking over it, I found where Vaike was. He was asleep of all things.

"Wake up!" I shouted into his ear causing his eyes to shoot open. He immediately grabbed a stick next to him and was waving it around.

"Huh?! What's going on?! Wait, this isn't my axe," Vaike eyed the stick in his hands strangely.

Taking over Sully's job, I smacked his head causing him to grab it from the pain.

"Hey, what's the deal?!" Vaike glared at me after dropping the stick he picked up.

"Now, let's get back to the fights! Next up is Vaike on the East Khan's team and Auden on the West Khan's team!" the gates into the arena opened slowly as they have done multiple other times before.

"That's the deal! You have a fight," I pointed out into the arena expecting him to simply charge out happily.

Instead he scratched his head, "I have to fight? Who? Why? When?"

I ignored his forgetfulness. Opting to skip past explaining to him, I grabbed his axe and shoved it into his hands before shoving him out the gate. I kicked him in the back to give him one final big push out into the arena.

"Hey, wait a second!" Vaike turned around to argue, but the gate closed in between me and him.

I pointed sternly towards the announcer in the middle that was waiting for Vaike to arrive.

Vaike grumbled a few words under his breath that I couldn't make out before making his way towards the center of the arena. Although, I didn't really care to know what he was saying.

I gazed past the upset Vaike and noticed the beard man himself standing already in the center of the battlefield.

Auden's on the other side, huh? Wonder how this will go…

/\/\/\/\/\

While Auden waited patiently near the announcer with his arms crossed, Vaike grumbled the whole way there. Eventually Vaike made it to the center.

"Alright, the rules are as follows: Do not make any attempts at your opponent's-" the announcer was going over the rules when Vaike hit the end of his axe into the poor man's gut knocking the air out of him.

"Ouch! What is the matter with you?!" the announcer gripped his gut and didn't look pleased about the abuse.

"It's a fight! We fight! Come on already," Vaike beckoned for the announcer to come towards him as he rested his axe on his shoulder.

"W-What? He's your opponent you baboon!" the announcer pointed at Auden whom was laughing.

"No, that's Auden. He's a Shepherd not an enemy of mine," Vaike stated plainly while eyeing the announcer as though he was short a few brain cells.

At this point, Auden fully started to laugh. He bellowed in laughter as he slapped his knee a few times. It was during this that the announcer extended both his hands towards Auden as though he was presenting him to Vaike, "Now he's your opponent. Look, I don't get paid enough to deal with this. Just hit each other and not me. No killing."

The announcer of the tournament walked away throwing his hands up in the air and shouting, "Begin!"

Auden slowly stopped in his fit of laughter while Vaike still looked as puzzled as ever.

Drawing out his short sword, Auden looked at Vaike, "That was possibly the most I've ever laughed in this arena. Good on you, boy!"

Vaike blinked in confusion, "Huh? Auden, what's going on?"

"It's a tourney, my boy! We're competitors! I dare say, it's quite unlucky for you to have been put up against I, the greatest adventurer to ever live; Auden!"

Auden raised both his hands above his head expecting an eruption of applause from the audience that has witnessed him fight multiple times in Regna Ferox. There was nothing but silence.

Vaike's eye twitched and he tightened his grip on his axe, "You? The greatest adventurer!? That title belongs to Ol' Teach!"

Vaike mimicked Auden's stance and awaited applause from the crowd. Not a single person clapped. In fact, a few people booed as a nosier audience member shouted, "Hurry up and fight already!"

Both Vaike and Auden looked incredibly confused about the situation they were faced with. Nobody in the crowd was cheering for either of them. They were actually getting annoyed by them. Neither of them could understand it.

They both simultaneously shrugged before lifting their weapons back up ready for a fight. Auden stood straight with his short sword in one hand aimed at Vaike while Vaike was hunched down closer to the ground holding his heavy axe in both his hands.

"For the title: The strongest man," Auden stated with a grin.

"You mean the one I already have?" Vaike replied while hefting his axe up and down.

Auden laughed heartily before going in for a swing at Vaike. He expected Vaike to dodge, but what he didn't see coming was the quick kick to his shin. Vaike never played fair in any of his fights.

With his axe hefted up, Vaike let a drop down for Auden. Stuffing the pain in his leg to the back of his head, Auden sidestepped Vaike's attack and grabbed ahold of his axe's haft.

Auden pulled the axe away from Vaike who struggled to hold onto his weapon. After a swift tug, Auden then pushed the axe back towards Vaike aiming the bottom of the axe for Vaike's gut which connected. All of the air was pushed out of his lungs and he was left gasping.

Capitalizing now on his own dirty tactic, Auden lunged his short sword towards Vaike aiming for his upper shoulder. Still trying to catch his breath, Vaike barely managed to dodge as the sword grazed his arm leaving a deep cut.

Vaike then threw his body into Auden's to drive his elbow deep into the other's gut. Auden recoiled from the attack and now both fighters were left gasping for air.

Being the first to recover, Vaike swung his axe for his enemy's side. Auden dodged back in a hurry still trying to catch his breath. Vaike followed forward as Auden swung his sword for him as he did. Blocking the strike with the haft of his axe, Vaike then threw a punch since he was too close now to swing his axe effectively.

Finally regaining his composure, Auden dodged the punch. He then swung his sword at Vaike. The sword turned out to be a distraction, however, as Vaike dodged right into a punch from Auden.

Gripping his face, Vaike staggered backwards. He removed his hand from his face revealing that his nose was clearly broken and bleeding. Nevertheless he went after Auden still wanting to fight.

It was a swing and a miss when Vaike swung his axe haphazardly towards Auden. Another swing that was erratic as the last came speeding towards him but was dodged again.

It was by this time that Auden noticed Vaike was fighting with no real plan in mind. His plan was simply to berserk.

Having handled situations with crazed fighters before, Auden knew to simply wait it out. Play defense long enough for him to tire himself out.

Playing it safely, Auden deflected and dodged Vaike's attacks. He watched Vaike's axe carefully since he never knew how Vaike would swing it next.

Finally, Vaike broke the constant axe swings and body checked Auden while his sword wasn't a threat. Auden fell onto his back and looked up at Vaike.

Vaike swung his axe down towards Auden with only the thought to injure him. He actually had to hold back the weight of his weapon in order to not accidentally cleave through his downed opponent.

Luckily, this slowed swing gave Auden enough time to roll out of the way and get up.

No matter how much he would never admit it, Auden was getting tired. On the other hand, Vaike seemed ready to keep going even though he's lost a bit of blood.

Auden couldn't play the long game. He had to cut down Vaike right now while he still had some steam left in him.

Slashing towards Vaike, Auden hoped for the best. He instead got the worst in the form of Vaike punching him in the gut as his sword went past.

Auden expected this which is why he was ready to grab ahold of Vaike's arm when he was punched. Vaike wasn't surprised by this. No, he was more surprised when he felt the ground disappear under his feet. He was being lifted up by Auden!

Dropping his short sword and hooking his other arm under Vaike's shoulder, Auden used the rest of his strength to lift the blonde up. He pivoted on his foot and used the rest of the strength he had in him to flip Vaike up and over him.

The entire move happened in a blur for Vaike. One moment he was standing, the next he was flipping through the air. The final moment had his back meet the cold hard dirt of the arena's floor.

Incredible pained filled both Vaike and Auden. The pain for Auden was from his age. He must've pulled on the wrong muscle too hard. On the other hand, Vaike couldn't move. The pain started in his back and has now worked its way throughout his entire body.

Struggling against his own pain, Auden reached towards his short sword. Not wanting to give up either, Vaike willed himself to move in the direction of his axe he let go of. Both fighters were in agonizing discomfort yet they continued. The first one to reach their weapon would more than likely be the match's winner.

The crowd was going wild. While Vaike's victory would mean complete victory for Flavia, Auden's victory would give Basilio a chance to still win. Inevitably, supporters of both sides were cheering for their respective team.

The unbearably slow race to their weapons continued on with the roar of the crowd. Inching closer and closer to their respective weapons, it seemed like Vaike was going to win.

It was only a couple of feet away from Vaike's hand now. Just a little closer and he would make it. Two feet soon died down to one and then it came down to inches. He could already feel the steel of his axe near his fingers.

Surprising everyone, Auden had given up on going after his own weapon. He instead opted to get behind Vaike and wrapped his arm around his neck effectively putting him in a sleeper hold.

Vaike struggled against the hold with one of his hands while he continued to reach for his axe. His fingers grazed against his weapon and sent it a centimeter further away from him. He cursed mentally as he could feel himself getting light headed.

Auden tightened his hold on Vaike and even fought against him to pull him away from the axe.

Nobody knew on how much longer Vaike could go without air. The hold he was in seemed like a solid one. There was still some hope though because he almost had a hold on his axe.

With his index finger acting as a hook, Vaike tried to pull his weapon just a bit closer so he could grab it. His vision was starting to get hazy. His head started to thump as he weakly wrapped his hand around his axe. He lifted it up barely and started to think of how he was going to swing it for the man on his back.

When Vaike started to twist his weapon around, his vision went black. His hand released his axe and it fell back down into the dirt. He was put to sleep by Auden.

Auden rolled off of Vaike's back wheezing and placing his hand under his own back. The both of them were lying on the ground, but it was clear who the winner was.

"Ladies and gentlemen there's your winner! Auden!" the announcer shouted excitedly while a squad of paramedics hauled the two contestants out of the arena.

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"Gosh. Weren't both of them Shepherds? Hard to root for someone when they're apart of the same team," Donnel stated exhaustedly after finishing watching Auden and Vaike's fight.

Auden's a Shepherd? Man, I forgot the guy was even a part of it… Lazy beard man…

"It's all down to you," Robin said as he eyed me from the bench across where I stood.

"Whoa! Do. Not. Put pressure on me!" I nervously started to stare out the iron gate.

"S-Sorry! I meant… Um… It's going down now! W-Wait! I mean, you're down and out from here! Wait a second!" Robin stumbled over his words.

"You are not helping," I sulkily said as I continued staring into the arena. The announcer was walking towards the center.

Crap. Why did it have to come to this? Everything is on my shoulders. Champion versus champion. This feels more scripted than a WWE match.

"Fellow Feroxians, are you ready for the final match of the day!?" the announcer was getting the crowd pumped while I felt like pulling a sheet over my head.

I took in a deep breath and exhaled.

I'm not ready.

The gates started to slide open slower than usual.

I'm not at all ready.

"We've reached the final match that'll decide the ruling Khan for the next two years!" I held in my rapidly increasing terror as the crowd started getting louder than they ever did before. People were stomping on their seats above. It was nerve wrecking.

I'm definitely not ready.

"Give 'em all ya got, Vince!" Donnel slapped my back and I staggered forward still trying to control my out of control heart beat.

"We're rooting for you!" Lissa said as I staggered past her.

"Everything's going downhill! Wait that doesn't sound good either," Robin continued to muse over what he should tell me before I had to fight.

Frederick scowled at me before breaking it for a brief second, "I wish you the best of luck… on behalf of milord."

"Now, give it up for the East Khan's champion, Vincent!" the announcer pointed towards me as I mindlessly moved forward.

The gate closed behind me as I stepped through it. There wasn't any going back now.

I looked all around the arena as I marched forward. Most to all of the Shepherds had close to front row seating. Sully seemed to be seated up there with a few bandages wrapped around different parts of her body. I guess she's fine.

All of them were clapping. Was it simply a force of the surroundings or did they actually have hope in me? The others seemed to have hope in me as well. I didn't know what to do with it all.

Continuing the scan of the arena, Basilio was watching me closely with his one eye while Lon'qu stood beside him. Basilio seemed incredibly happy while Lon'qu was looking as stoic as he probably usually is.

Flavia was on the opposite side of Basilio in the arena. She was grinning madly while she clapped.

I made it to the announcer of the tournament and my eyes continued to mindlessly look around the arena. All the fear I had in me was gone now thanks to me finally being able to get out here. The buildup was completely gone. Now, I was left in wonder on just how many eyes were on me currently. I did a double take of the entire arena. It was definitely overflowing with people.

It was only after I felt the man next to me tug on my shirt that I noticed he was speaking to me.

"Hey, strike a pose for the crowd!" he was really pushy on wanting me to do what he said.

Did everybody have to deal with this guy?

Despite my thoughts, I tried doing something to satisfy him. I raised my right fist into the air and the crowd cheered again for me.

"Alright, next up is the West Khan's new champion! He calls himself after the hero king himself! Give it up for Marth!" the announcer then pointed off towards the already marching masked swordsman.

Lucina didn't look nearly as marveled as I did entering into the arena. She seemed dead focused on getting to the center.

Could it be? A-Are her eyes are closed!?

It seemed likely enough because she walked past both the announcer and I.

"U-Um… Marth! Come back!" the announcer called out.

Lucina froze in place before looking back to me and the announcer. She quickly made her way back and bowed her head apologetically.

"My deepest apologies. I hadn't-!" Lucina looked surprised when she brought her head back up.

She seemed to have her attention locked onto me. It was only thanks to the announcer telling her to strike a pose that she broke focus. Holding her falchion above her, the crowd roared with applause.

The announcer quickly went over the rules with us and made his away immediately away from us.

"You are Vincent. From the forest, correct?" Lucina asked me while she gripped her Falchion with both her hands.

"Well, I would hope I still am. It would be kind of weird if I wasn't," I said as I scratched the back of my head.

"This is the final match everyone! Give it your all! Ready?" the announcer paused for dramatic effect.

"Then your captain… Chrom. Where is he?" Lucina sounded worried as she let her fake voice crack despite me already knowing she was a girl.

I guess she was really expecting to fight her dad.

"He's currently bed ridden recovering," I told as little as I possibly could.

"Begin!" the announcer cried out the start of our match.

I realized that I had yet to draw my blade yet and quickly did so. I clumsily bumped my sword's sheath into my thunder tome that I tied to my side, but I still managed to get my sword out without dropping either. Having recently sharpened my blade, I was confident that it was in good shape.

Now I know that I'm not the fastest person in the world. If Lucina was going to fight me, she would've already been in my

face in that small time frame.

Unusually, she simply stood there in the same fighting stance as before the match.

"Recovering from what?" she seemed to have contemplated over what to ask.

I loosened up in my stance as the crowd started to murmur over the lack of any fighting yet.

"You ask a lot of questions for someone that only met the Captain once. Look, he's fine and that's all you need to know," I tried to act as annoyed as possible rather than like a man that knows a daughter is worried about her father.

Lucina grunted in anger at how I handled the situation. I half expected this. Still, she didn't go to attack me and this was a massive problem to the crowd.

They started to boo us and looked to be getting increasingly mad at the lack of actual fighting occurring.

Man, Feroxians would HATE the crap out of Dragonball. An entire episode filled with screaming and dialogue would drive them all insane.

I was starting to worry I wouldn't have to get my butt handed to me by Lucina. No, it was in fact even worse. I was going to have a mob of angry proclaimed warriors beating the living crap out of me if something didn't happen soon.

Lucina seemed to have taken notice of the increasing anger in the air. However, she didn't do what was needed to calm it. She still didn't attack me.

"Hey… I'm not interested in inciting riots. No hard feelings if I hurt ya!" Taking the initiative, I charged towards Lucina and swung for her side.

The girl easily deflected my blade out of the way and counter attacked me. Her swings were incredibly fast. I almost didn't even notice it happening before it did. Luckily for me, I was able to step out of her Falchion's path.

Finally the crowd stopped in their anger and seemed satisfied for now.

That's a load off my- God! She's gonna kill me!

Lucina wasn't being so passive anymore. She didn't seem like she was going to give me any room for a breather. Her speed was incredible and her form didn't have a single flaw in it.

Go for the low blow. It always works. Wait. If she recovers, she'll do it to you! Don't go for the low blow. Protect the jewels… Dodge!

Lucina had swung her Falchion for me to which I barely managed to dodge back in time. A second swing came plummeting towards my shoulder I resolved to block with my sword.

She swung her sword with such strength that it crashed into my blade hard. I struggled to keep her from pushing my sword out of the way and her own into me.

There was then a very distinct cracking sound I heard coming from my very own sword. Looking at it, it was starting to crack under Lucina's blade.

The hell?! I couldn't have sharpened the blade to thin, could I?!

Letting Lucina put anymore force on my sword would spell disaster. I made a quick retreat to my right in order to get away from her.

Surprisingly, I wasn't followed by my opponent. No, she kept her cool and fell back into a fighting stance. It was unnerving at how calm she was currently.

I took in a deep breath to calm myself. I wasn't nearly as skilled as Lucina in swordplay. There wasn't the smallest chance I would probably ever catch up to her in terms of skill. Despite this, I still have some hope. I would just have to try fighting differently.

Taking the opportunity Lucina was providing me, I went on the offensive. She merely awaited my attack. When I got within range, I stabbed my sword at her. I missed horribly because of how fast she dodged.

I knew she would still have lightning fast reflexes. She got around me and was going for a back attack. I rolled forward

getting nicked on my back as I did. Her blade was incredibly sharp so even a small cut felt very deep.

After finishing my roll, I pivoted on my feet to turn my body fully back around. My pivot led me to be face to face with Lucina whom was swinging her weapon at me. I didn't have much time to think about it. All I could do was instinctively dodge out of the way.

Following up on her attack, Lucina spun her sword around to go for another strike. Her second attack felt easier to dodge. I ducked under her attack and riposted with my own. In the blink of an eye, she managed to get her blade around and smack it into mine. My sword instantly cracked in half. She struck my sword perfectly where it was beginning to crack.

Staring blankly at my now broken sword, I felt the cold presence of Lucina's Falchion hanging over my shoulder. I dropped my broken sword and started to raise my hands up slowly.

The audience started to whistle and chant for both Basilio and Marth.

"Surrender," Lucina stated as she held her sword next to me.

"You mean you wish to surrender to me? Very well, I accept," I replied to her with a smirk.

"You're weapon is broken. Mine is still intact. You'd need something short of a miracle to win," Lucina didn't find my jesting to be in the least bit funny. Actually, I'm not sure she even thought I was joking.

"Hm? My weapon is still very much intact. You sure you can see under that mask?" I continued to smirk.

Lucina seemed to look confused, "What in the name of the Gods are you talking about?"

"Crash down from the skies above and unleash thine fury across the plains, thunder!" I muttered the incantation under my breath and my thunder tome hanging on my side started to spark. My idea seemed to have worked!

Not even attempting to aim the electricity, I let it discharge completely in front of me. It shocked Lucina causing her to stumble backwards and fall to a knee.

The previously chanting crowd fell deathly silent after I used my spell.

I waved my hand in front of my face to wave off some of the resulting smoke, "Oh… Got quiet all of a sudden."

Turns out I was right in thinking you only need to have a tome attached to you in some way. I figured they couldn't have any kind of eye detectors to tell you were actually looking at the pages. These books aren't like phones from my world.

Recovering from being shocked, Lucina got up. She looked a bit more serious than she did in the beginning. My reasoning for this was reinforced when I could feel a cold aura coming from her. No, scratch that. I could actually see her starting to radiate.

She came charging at me with breath taking speed as her Falchion started to… sparkle?

I didn't have a chance at dodging her. She swiped her sword along my abdomen as she ran towards me leaving a sizeable wound. Another fast slice glided up across my chest leaving a third deep wound.

Staggering back from the wounds I just received, I placed a hand over my bleeding chest. There was a lot of blood. My back also started to feel wet from the first scratch I got.

Looking back at Lucina, she looked completely fine. I couldn't believe it. My thunder spell definitely left some burn marks on her. So, why weren't they there anymore?

There wasn't any time to think about what shenanigans were currently occurring. I had to start retaliating or else I might get struck again.

Charging up a thunder spell, I actually started to focus on aiming it this time. The energy gathered in my palm and I quickly dispelled it at Lucina.

The spell was flying quick and was heading for the target. Suddenly, however, it quickly shot down into the ground as I crumpled slightly from the pain in my gut.

Damn spell… Needs too much focus.

Without warning, Lucina attacked me. I fumbled out of the way as I felt the air stir from her attack. Another second or two and I might've been looking at the insides of my body.

Not having many other options left, I prepared another spell. This time, I focused solely on my right hand that I tightened into a fist. When I found an opening, I punched Lucina and let the spell electrocute her.

Spasming for a brief moment, she managed to push me away from her breathing heavily.

As Lucina panted heavily from being shocked, I could feel my own blood dripping onto the dirt below me. Knowing the sight all too well by this point, I directed my attention away from it and back onto the fight.

The battle continued to rage on as Lucina and I attacked each other. I tried to keep all my focus on landing my spells whether they were ranged or a melee strike. I couldn't count how many times I repeated the thunder incantation. Too many was definitely a feasible amount.

Meanwhile, Lucina kept up with her precise strikes. She didn't seem as worn out as me, but being shocked still mustn't feel good.

Lucina swung her weapon downwards for me. My legs felt weak but I still managed to back out of the way. She then took her blade and stabbed for me. I could feel my vision swaying as I barely could stand anymore. In one fell swoop, Lucina's Falchion went through my stomach. I coughed up blood as the spiking pain shot up to my head.

She started to retract her sword out of my body slowly and I could feel more of my blood shooting out as she did so.

My wavering gaze caught the sight of the Shepherds in the crowd. They looked… sad? Worried? A mix of emotions was across all of their faces but none of them looked pleased to see me falling.

One very small part of me knew then. They really did believe in me. They placed their hopes onto my shoulders and I had failed in achieving them. My failure was a failure for all of them. I felt ashamed.

No… I won't… I can't let it end now!

I grabbed ahold of the sword exiting my stomach. The sharp blade cut past the leather gauntlet covering my hand and into it. More blood started to fall down below me.

They have hope in me… I can't let it die!

"What are you doing?! You need to stop so you can be healed!" Lucina tried to pull her sword away from me but I was attached to it like dead weight.

My legs gave out on me and I fell to my knees still clutching onto the sword. I coughed up more of my own blood and my eyesight became hazy.

"Ha… Ha… Not before you surrender," I replied weakly trying to hold my body up with Lucina's Falchion.

Crash down… From the skies above and…

My thunder tome started to spark as I slowly thought of the spell's wording.

Noticing my continued resistance, Lucina used all of her strength to remove my sword from her grip. I attached both of my hands to keep a grip on it as the rest of my body waved around like a ragdoll.

Unleash… thine...

I coughed violently as a pool of my own blood started to form underneath me. The cold liquid was all around me.

Lucina huffed before kicking me off her weapon, "You're terrible at handling your life."

My body fell back and my head cracked against the ground with a thud. Everything started to fall dark around me. I could hear the cheering of the crowd. The announcer proclaimed the winner of the fight. Roars of excitement filled the stadium. My body was slowly lifted up and I was being carried out of the arena. My last sight was all of the Shepherds. They all had a look of sadness.

I lost.

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Weakly, I opened my eyes that had trouble adjusting to the light. I could feel that I was lying on a slightly comfortable bed with blankets covering up to my neck.

As my eyes adjusted to the light in the room, a voice spoke up from beside me.

"Finally awake, now are we?" the voice sounded like it was to my left.

I turned my head and tried squinting my eyes to see better.

It can't be… Chrom!?

Right beside my bedside was Chrom sitting down in a chair. He was wearing all of his usual gear and looked as good as the day I first saw him.

Now that I'm thinking about it, this room is the one Chrom was placed in. The axe being held in that display case is right across from the foot of the bed.

"For a second there, we thought you might not wake up at all. It's relieving to see you did. Actually-" Chrom started talking as I tried moving my body in the bed. I felt sore, but could at least move.

"Wait… I don't understand. What's going on?" I cut off Chrom as he was starting to trail off.

He paused momentarily but replied to me, "You've been out for a good day or so. We've just been patiently waiting for our comrade to wake up."

I've been out for a day? Right…

Thinking back, I remembered the amount of blood I spilt across the arena floor. I remembered how I lost the tournament for everyone.

"Sorry, about losing I mean. I'm sure everyone's told you," I sat up and tried not to make eye contact with Chrom because of the shame I felt. The blanket covering my body slid down and I could see that I wasn't wearing a shirt. Instead, I was completely wrapped from the top of my chest down to my hip in white bandages. My hands were entirely bandaged as well. It was painful moving them.

"You're apologizing to me? It should be me to say sorry," Chrom said as he placed a hand on my shoulder.

"For what? Being in a coma? No, I was the one to mess up. I lost Regna Ferox's support because of my loss," I faced Chrom with a self-hating scowl.

Chrom shook his head at my bitter self-loathing, "That doesn't matter. What matters is the fact you kept the Shepherds together when I could not."

I blinked in confusion at Chrom. He released his hand from my shoulder and smiled, "I'm grateful and glad to know you're a Shepherd."

"I can't… but we still didn't get the Feroxians help. What are we going to do?" I wanted to change the topic from appraising of me.

Chrom laughed and stood up from the chair he was sitting in next to my bed, "We'll figure out something. Us Shepherds aren't really known for giving up so easily."

He walked towards the door exiting the room and opened it. Turning back to me he said, "We're talking with one of the Khans in the entrance hall. Come down once you're ready."

The Captain exited slowly out the door and shut it behind him.

Surprisingly, I felt better. Even though I lost an important match, I felt exceptionally well about myself. Maybe it was because despite my loss nobody is holding it against me. I tried my best and lost; everyone understands that I suppose.

Twisting myself out of bed, I placed my feet on the floor and stood up. Next to my bedside was all of my gear. My clothes and armor that were ruined during the fight were either stitched or repaired.

Judging by the fact only Lissa knew how to stitch together anything in our group, I guess she was the one to mend my clothing.

Throwing my shirt over my head, I got dressed and picked up my belongings.

Next time for sure. I'll win it for them!

I went down the steps and found myself heading towards the entrance hall. Upon arrival there, I spotted multiple figures I could recognize instantly.

Standing on one side was Robin, Frederick, Lissa, and Chrom. On the opposite side to them were the khans Basilio, Flavia. Also, Lon'qu and what looked to be Olivia were in the hall as well.

Upon my approach, my friends waved to me causing the others in the room to turn and see me approaching.

The first thing to happen surprised everyone in the hall. Scared would actually be more fitting of a word to describe how we all felt. Olivia let out an unusually loud shriek and hid behind the largest man in the room Basilio.

I had to pause in my march because it almost gave me a heart attack. The two khans looked to each other before looking back to me.

"Don't look at me! I didn't think I looked that bad getting out of bed!" I waved my hands in front of myself defensively.

"What's wrong, Olivia? You recognize Vincent here?" Flavia asked the pink dancer peeking around Basilio.

"No…" she replied meekly still trying to hide.

That doesn't explain anything!

Her voice sounded… different though. It was much higher in pitch than the voice actor's for her was. It wasn't all that surprising though. Not many of the character's voices were completely the same as they were in the game. Her voice just seems to be the most different from the original that I heard.

Breaking the silence in the hall, Basilio laughed loudly, "First your champion loses to mine, then he scares the color out of Olivia!"

"Shut up…" Flavia sounded angry as she crossed her arms.

"Where'd you find this one?! He's a real card!" Basilio didn't seem to mind taunting his fellow khan.

"I told you to shut up!" Flavia yelled at the top of her lungs.

During the khans bickering, I started to weasel my way past them. On my way past I could tell Olivia was purposely hiding from me as she circled around Basilio to keep the large man in between us.

What's up with her?

Eventually, though, I made it to my friends and stood next to Robin. Leaning a bit closer to Robin, I whispered, "Have they been doing this for a while?"

"Saying yes to that would be an understatement," Robin replied weakly trying to hide under his hood.

"My champion definitely worked yours over! Not a scratch on the boy when he got out!" Basilio was still gloating to Flavia.

"Ha! That's because yours was too busy smoldering from the shock treatment mine delivered! Had mine brought a feasibly working sword, he would've won!" Flavia was pointing her finger in Basilio's face.

"Um… I'm kind of standing right here," I raised my hand as though I was a child in school to catch their attention.

It ended up working I suppose since they both faced me. Basilio roared with laughter, "Ah! Yes, quite the show you put on against my champion! Shame it didn't last longer, but of course my champion is the best of the best."

Flavia was holding back her anger as much as she could. Honestly, I felt bad having made her lose her chance at ruling khan. Basilio definitely seemed like a poor winner.

"Pardon me, but we're here to discuss things, correct?" Chrom politely cut in.

Basilio frowned and looked at Chrom, "Bah! Shout if you're going to speak. You're too quiet!"

"Damnit! Will we discuss anything at all?!" Chrom lost it a little and actually raised his voice to the khans.

Basilio and Flavia didn't seem to mind at all and actually seemed happy.

Raising his fist in front of him, Basilio said, "That's it! Now I can hear you!"

Still speaking with a louder voice, Chrom continued, "It's already known that we wish to have Regna Ferox's aid. What will it take to earn this, Basilio?"

Basilio laughed again at Chrom's question, "You've already got it!"

Everyone in the hall jolted at this. Even Flavia was surprised.

"W-What?! I'm sorry, but why so quickly?" Chrom didn't understand like the rest of us.

"It was per the request of my champion strangely enough. That boy has delusional dreams I tell you. Still, I agreed should he win me title of ruling khan and he did!" Basilio was as joyous as ever.

Flavia did a double take at what Basilio said, "You mean you agreed to the same bargain as me?!"

"Huh? What? You promised Vincent here the same thing?" Basilio was finally a part of the confusion.

Both of the khans looked away from each other and towards us Shepherds with scowls. It was a terrifying sight seeing two rulers extremely angry at you.

When the tension was about to hit its peak, both of the khans smiled and started laughing loudly. We were in agonizing confusion.

"Played us for fools they did!" Flavia was laughing harder than I'd seen before.

"Baha! You Ylisseans are a clever bunch!" Basilio was laughing just as loud as he usually did.

"I'm sorry if you think we planned this, but we really didn't know what that "Marth" was doing," Chrom was speaking the truth.

It didn't seem like either of the khans believed him but they still seemed happy.

Basilio stopped in his fit of laughter, "Does it matter now? You got our support, boy!"

"Are you sure? We really didn't earn it," Chrom was being modest.

Just take it already!

Basilio frowned, "Hey, I'm the ruling khan here. I'll be the one to make the decisions. Now, you have my word that Regna Ferox will support Ylisse."

"T-Thank you!" Chrom was taken aback by Basilio's generosity.

Basilio waved off Chrom and motioned for Lon'qu to come to him. Lon'qu was holding some sort of steel kite shield that had a golden bear standing up embellished on it.

"Also, take this. It was for my champion, but he ran off before I could award it to him," Lon'qu walked over and handed the steel shield to me. I looked to the others if this was alright and it seemed it was.

Lon'qu then stood in between me and Robin causing a slight rise in awkwardness. I figure he stood between me and Robin to keep himself separated from any female trying to approach him on either side. It still felt weird because of how nonchalantly he did it.

Join us you will.

Before Chrom could ask for the rest of us about Lon'qu, Basilio answered him, "Let Lon'qu join you in your endeavors as well. You'll find he's quite skilled as a fighter!"

"You're kindness is as large as you, Basilio! We'll return the favor as soon as we can!" Chrom was overly ecstatic with joy. He then turned and started on his way out of the castle motioning for us to follow.

Basilio shouted while we walked out of the castle, "Feel free to return the favor as a convoy full of Ylissean ale!"

Without much reason left to stick around in Regna Ferox, we loaded up our convoy and started on our way back to Ylisse.

Getting up onto Choc, I gave the castle a final look.

Things are starting to feel… right. Let's just try and keep them that way.

There you go! The end of the tournament!

Lot of references and quotes thrown around in this one. Spot any?

This chapter definitely felt like it had a lot more comedy it in. Of course, it's comedy to me. Maybe you don't like my take on funny.

I can't tell you on how long I've been thinking about Auden fighting Vaike. They both have pretty big egos so it was fun to finally pit them against each other.

The whole tournament arc was definitely made longer to develop Vincent more with the Shepherds. Big change on how he thinks of the group as a whole now.

The language in the tomes is a small spin on the ancient language from Radiant Dawn and Path of Radiance. I didn't copy it exactly obviously, but more or less combined the way it worked across everything. There was no way I could make the language too complicated because of my screw up on the overall writing of the world. There would've been a whole side plot of someone teaching Vincent how to read, but that fell through so I had to make it a little easy and get it over with.

That's about it. Leave a review on what you thought about the chapter! Also, don't forget you can send me a PM with any ideas/questions you may have!

Chapter 14: Flowers and Cards

More quick updates? Sure. Why not? Have to get them out before college starts back up. I'm learning German this year so that should be fun.

Well, less about me and more about the fic. This chapter was difficult strangely enough. I can talk about that later but I seriously had about two other versions of this.

Look at all you wonderful people reviewing! You're killing me here! I love it! I enjoy it so much I'll respond to you all. Feel free to skip to the chapter cause this one's a doozy.

JCCT: Friends? What friends? Kidding. On a serious note though, I already have SO much trouble trying to decide on who to pull into the spotlight as it is. Frankly, FE just has so many characters I don't think I'll do this. It'll become an even bigger mess than it already is. Sorry!

SilverFlameHaze: Robin is quite the card. Might have to keep an eye on him lest he grow more powerful… hm… jesterful? That doesn't sound like a word but it is now! You're thoughts on tomes are interesting to say the least! We'll have to see what happens.

realisticFantasy: Glad you're liking it! I like to think I'm doing enough describing to immerse readers, but it's even better when people actually say they are! Anyways, I try and keep plot interventions to a minimum. There needs to be reasons leading up to something for it to happen. Lucina is a skilled warrior and Vincent isn't. Those things and others weigh in heavily when I start writing. Events are gonna keep on changing and changing. I don't like writing the same dialog either!

Guest: Haha. You can't quite call it cheating when it is the ability of her Falchion to heal herself after all. She only necessarily did it once on top of that. The aura around her was supposed to be in a way conveying her about to get a critical hit which also did Vincent in. Also, I don't quite like using stats in a world turned from a game. If we go by that, then what would Vincent's magic stat be? Probably one because "real person" and all, haha. Still glad you liked! Fantasy girls know how to kick butt!

llat-2: It was definitely a fun one for me to write! Glad you enjoyed it. Vincent did have the odds stacked against him going up against a member of S.T.A.- I mean, Lucina.

Annonnyn: It's moments like those that I feel writers should lead into more often. It makes moments more memorable if you ask me. Thanks for the review of course.

Is it bad that I like responding to you guys? I just can't help it at times.

Well, less me blabbing and more chapter reading. Go on and read it!

Italics will be character's thoughts and /\/\/\/\/\ will indicate a scene change.

Disclaimer: I do not own Fire Emblem nor do I own anything else I may reference. I only own my OCs.

Flowers and Cards

It was a stormy day for the capitol of Plegia. Rain poured hard and gusts of wind were tearing apart poorly built buildings. Civilians scattered through the streets scurrying into houses. They all wished to escape the cruel weather.

Being in a semi-arid region, this sort of weather was a rarity for Plegians to deal with.

Dirt roads turned to mud and loose items were blown away with the wind. All the while a man in a crimson cloak marched through the town.

The cloaked man looked to his sides noticing how far in disrepair the capitol was. The war between Plegia and Ylisse left both kingdoms in disrepair. Plegia, however, seemed like it was still feeling some of the effects while Ylisse had recovered. The Plegian's king, Gangrel, likes to remind them all of these effects almost daily as well.

Continuing in his walk through the streets, the man passed by a house in slightly more disrepair than the others. On the inside of it lived a family of four. Currently the adults of the household were having trouble patching a hole in their house's wall. They would need to seal it quickly if they didn't want to continue getting drenched.

The cloaked man walked by this torn up house without sparing a glance. He continued to walk dead straight through the

capitol. His target destination was a large castle overlooking the town with a giant dragon's skull in front of it.

After a long walk, the man made it to the castle's intimidatingly large doors. Pushing them open slowly, he walked inside as a flock of crows followed him in. Guards waiting on the inside hurriedly shut the large doors as the flock of crows circled overhead.

"Is the king here?" the man in the cloak asked as he looked up at the crows.

"Yes, he should be in his throne room right now," a guard saluted the cloaked man.

"Good. Keep up the good work. Yada yada yada," the man wearing a cloak started to walk away waving his hand around as he did so. The noisy flock of birds followed shortly behind.

Entering into the castle's throne room, there was two individuals already waiting inside of it. One was a man with his head resting atop of his hand as he sat in a luxurious throne. The other was a woman sitting on one of the throne's arms with her hand brushing the back of the man.

The man had red hair and wore a gold crown signifying his rule as the king of Plegia. He wore black clothing and a golden cape that was temporarily taken off. The man's fingernails were unhealthily long. His boots looked highly alike the ones a jester might wear and at first glance a person might mistake him for one if they aren't from Plegia. Although, that very same person would have their eyes removed the next day.

Sitting on the throne's arm next to the king was a woman wearing all black. Her clothes were very scanty as they left almost nothing to the imagination. She had black feathers sticking up out of the neckline of her outfit.

The man wearing the cloak fell to a knee as he entered the room.

"My liege, I've returned," he was highly respectful when speaking towards the king.

The crows flew into the throne room and perched up on various hanging objects. The entire flock of them was watching the room from high above.

The king perked up at the sound of the man's voice. He was almost scarily happy, "Oh? Is that you Ardal? Take off that infernal hood!"

Ardal obeyed as his king ordered and took off his hood. He had short spiky red hair and scraggly growing facial hair.

The mad king started to chuckle when Ardal revealed his face, "So? How did it go? Tell me you brought one of their heads! Bwa ha ha! I can already imagine the face they were probably making!"

The mad king had gotten up from his throne and was almost dancing joyfully with his eyes closed.

Following the king in his joyous dance, the woman in black calmly placed her hands onto his shoulders snapping him out of his imagination. The woman leaned her voluptuous body against the king's, "King Gangrel, maybe you should let him tell you of the faces that were made."

Gangrel nodded in agreement, "Yes, yes, Aversa. Well, go on."

Ardal grimaced and couldn't find the will to stand up and face his king, "I do not have a head for you, my liege. Nor do I know of the face the wretched prince may have made approaching death."

"What are you saying?" Gangrel lost all of the joy that had filled him and was now scowling.

"However," Ardal finally raised his head to look at Gangrel, "I used my most potent of poisons! I'm certain that he's writhing with pain as we speak."

"You mean to tell me you've come back to me and you can't even confirm the death of not even one of your targets!?" The mad king had lost it and shouted loudly causing the crows in the room to scatter around momentarily.

"No, but I had a good reason to return," Ardal tried to remain calm under Gangrel's anger.

"And I have good reason to sever your hands from your arms you lousy child!... Explain yourself," Gangrel stopped his anger just barely.

Ardal winced slightly but managed to not show it, "The prince and his army were heading straight for Regna Ferox."

"Why should I care? I could care less what those icicles do!" Gangrel laughed as Aversa continued to pamper him.

"They went directly into Regna Ferox. I had my suspicions so I had some of my sources confirm it," Ardal finally raised himself to a standing position dusting off his clothes.

"And?" Gangrel looked curious.

"The Ylisseans wish to gain the Feroxians military aid," Ardal looked dead serious.

This shocked Gangrel and made him scowl in response. He turned around to face away from Ardal as he angrily muttered, "Those conniving little-!"

As Gangrel continued to mutter to himself, Ardal stated his thoughts, "If you still want the Fire Emblem, my liege, we should act sooner rather than later."

Suddenly, Gangrel started to chuckle quietly to himself. This peaked the curiosity of Ardal.

"Oh, we'll act soon. In fact, we'll do it now!" Gangrel extended both of his hands above his head and started to laugh manically.

"R-Right now?!" Ardal was incredibly shocked.

"Yes, thanks to that Outrealmer… Well, let's just say we'll be arranging a reunion the Ylissean royals won't soon forget! Bwa ha ha! Because they'll all be dead!" Gangrel continued in his maniacal laughter as the crows in the room started squawking and flying around the room.

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The trip back to the Shepherd's HQ was surprisingly a relaxing one. It was a couple of days of travel but that was simply because the size of our party. Also, there was a bit of effort in having to deal with a few of the kinks of various people in the army.

There was a time where we left Kellam back at our camp site because everyone had forgotten him. Also, it's better to not bring up how everybody found out Lon'qu had gynophobia. I think the girls of the army sent him into a mental breakdown when they all tried introducing themselves to him… at the same time.

Also, Auden remained up in Regna Ferox. He said his reason was that he still had business to attend to up there. That must've been code for he literally hasn't popped the question to Raimi yet. Either way, the beard man said he would come help if Regna Ferox's forces went to help.

Eventually we all made it back in one piece though. Chrom happily informed Emmeryn of the success of the mission and the rest of us fell into a lax period.

There was nothing to do. Literally nothing at all. Bandits weren't attacking anywhere. Training was proceeding as boring as it ever did. The only time we were told to do something recently was when a citizen needed help getting their cat out of a tree.

Seriously, we're not errand boys.

Anyways, maybe I should be grateful for the lack of events. It gives me ample time to practice my magic at least.

Speaking of, currently I was testing magic out in the field near the Shepherd's HQ. It was early in the day. Actually, I even got up before Frederick so I don't think there's a single person up beside myself.

Out in the field, I brought various tomes that Robin allowed me to temporarily pull out of the armory. I simply told him that I wanted to try out all kinds of magic so he let me.

In my possession for the testing was a wind, fire, and my thunder tome.

Learning how magic worked was probably the quickest route to me being able to at least stand up against some of the people in this world. Of course, learn and abuse it would probably be my two goals.

If I could fly with a wind tome, that would be awesome!

The first step to achieving both of my goals would start with understanding the core of how the magic worked. Figure out how it worked entirely. That was a good start.

Starting things off, I casted a thunder spell and focused on moving it around. No problem there. Then, I went ahead and cast a fire spell. Things went sour fast.

The electric spell went haywire and ended up giving me a good shock treatment. I then lost concentration on the fire spell that exploded on the other side. Needless to say, I was writhing in my pain after the quick failure.

Damn… Son of a… I'm gonna need to take a bath in concoctions after this!

I was prepared to come out of this testing with a few bruises, but to start off with an explosion!? This was probably a bit too far over my head.

Knowing that I would probably get hurt, I also took a concoction with me. It was contained in a bottle larger than a vulnerary but they both looked like the same blue sparkling liquid.

As much as I didn't want to, I decided to drink some of its contents. It would waste too much to try and pour it across all of my burn marks.

Gagging after quickly downing some of the liquid, I placed the bottle back down a safe distance from where I was testing.

More tests flew by with time. I wanted to try as much as I could before I wore myself out. More or less, I did learn a couple of things.

The first and probably most obvious thing was that it was impossible to cast two different spells at the same time. Unless I'm just too simple minded to do so, it seemed like casting two different spells was out of my range. What would happen is that once the second spell is casted, things go horribly wrong. Usually, the first spell goes out of control and the second spell can be maintained. There are times where, unluckily, they will both explode.

Following the last test was to see if a spell could be cast multiple times in succession. The short answer to this is yes. A spell can be multiplied as many times as possible by the tome. Essentially, a spell can be charged to higher and higher levels. The downside? It takes serious mental control. I can handle casting a single copy of the spell; maybe even two given enough concentration. Three, however, is when stuff gets out of hand. I'm sure experts might have no trouble. I am no expert though.

In addition to the tests, I practiced my aim in firing spells. I was definitely improving. It was getting much easier to hit a target a good distance away from myself.

The fundamentals were coming together smoothly after a rocky start. It was about time I tried theories. I thought it would be easy to start with the easy stuff and went for my thunder tome.

So if this was like my world, then in theory what I'm controlling in a thunder spell is a ton of electrons. Small particles that accompany all things physical in the world. It's basically a bunch of negative energy flying around. Positive energy is always attracted to negative energy. In a way, it could be possible to create a magnet with this spell.

The spell doesn't act entirely on how normal science would dictate though.

That's because it's magic…

Electrons would usually go straight for the most positive area around them. This spell did no such thing. It only went to where I directed it. Still, I could work with that.

In order to test out the theory, I hung my shield off of the tree out in the middle of the field.

After I broke my last sword, I was given a steel sword which should work in testing. Steel, was an alloy with iron in it which made it a ferrous metal. All in theory, it would stick to a magnet.

Charging a thunder spell, I directed it towards my shield hanging from the tree. I then had it spin circles around it until it made a coiling shape around my shield. This would hopefully generate a magnetic field. The electricity should remain there so long as I keep my eye on it.

I believe I've made an electromagnet. The only way to know for sure would be to see if it actually worked.

Holding my steel sword in front of my body, I cautiously approached the electric shield. As I got closer and closer, I felt a tug on the weapon in my hand. Then, without warning, my sword flew out of my grip and stuck against the shield.

Words escaped me. I was amazed to see what I came up with. I made a magnet with magic! Not only that, but a strong

one! I wanted to try out more things. With spells in this world, all kinds of things could be made on the spot.

Still, it was almost time for everyone to be waking up. I'm not trying to be sneaky, but I also don't want to have a confrontation with anyone about what I was doing just yet. Especially not Miriel. She would pick my brain dry!

I let the spell I was using dispel into the ground and I started to pack up everything I dragged outside.

While lugging stuff back inside, I stumbled across Sumia coming downstairs. She looked like she was looking for something until she noticed me.

The flowery girl waved to me and started to approach me. She got about five feet in her walk before she tripped.

Ouch. Usually a person falling is kind of funny. I just feel bad for Sumia though.

I made an attempt at offering her help, but she politely declined.

She ended up managing to get back up on her own, "Morning, Vincent. Have you seen Maribelle around? I can't find her."

"Maribelle? Can't say I have. Of course, it is still pretty early. I think you and me are the only two awake," I laughed a bit.

"Fiddlesticks! I guess you're right. Maybe she's still in her room," Sumia looked coyly back up the stairs where all of the Shepherds rooms are.

"What do you need her for?" I decided to inquire.

The usually bubbly girl shot her head back around so fast I thought I got whiplash from just watching, "Oh, I just thought maybe I'd ask her to go flower picking with me. I don't want to bother her if she's still asleep though."

"Can't you just wait for her to wake up then?" I rubbed the back of my neck.

Sumia looked shocked I would've even suggest what I did, "What?! I can't wait! The morning is the best time to pick flowers!"

"Hey, I don't know about flower picking times! I can barely tell flowers apart from each other besides their colors!" I put my hands up in defense.

Sumia then placed a finger onto her chin, "Hm… I know! You can come flower picking with me! I can tell you all about them!"

"I don't really think that's-" Not even allowing me to finish, Sumia grabbed my hand and started to drag me.

"Come on! It'll be fun!" she continued to drag me towards the front door.

"Wait a second! I haven't even eaten today! I'm starving! Sumia!" Despite my resistance, I feared I would end up being taken anyways.

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Even though I kicked and fought, Sumia managed to get me all the way to a field of flowers a fair distance away from Ylisstol. There was a multitude of different colors. If there was a color I couldn't see, it was probably because I'm too distracted with just how many there are.

The sun was almost at its peak in the sky now because of how long it took to walk here.

I may have added to that time.

Still, it was a clear day for Ylisse. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. It made standing in an open field of flowers somewhat enjoyable. The levels of pollen in the air were astronomical though.

"Oh! Look at this one, Vincent!" Sumia called back to me waving another flower she picked. The flower in her hand was yet another pink one. I couldn't tell the difference from the last bunch of pink ones she plucked.

I acknowledged her waving the flower and she quickly went back to looking for more. The girl was acting really childish. It was slightly amusing to watch how excited she could get by picking random flowers.

Eventually Sumia came jogging back to me with a ton of flowers in her hands. She brought a basket along with her to

carry them all. I thought it was a bit ridiculous to bring a basket but she definitely needed one. The basket's almost overflowing with them by this point!

"That's a lot of flowers," I muttered while Sumia got all of her flowers into her basket.

"Yup! You can never have too much of something you like," Sumia beamed as she picked up her basket.

"If it's something you like, than I suppose," I rubbed the side of my head as I watched insects fly to and from different flowers.

Sumia frowned, "Are you not having fun, Vincent?"

I focused back on the girl, "Hey, it's not that I'm not having fun. Picking flowers just isn't my cup of tea."

Sumia smiled brightly, "Well, what IS your cup of tea?"

"My cup of tea?" I recoiled slightly and then fell into a thoughtful pose, "I'd have to think about that."

I can't really say what I like to do. None of it exists. There's no way I can say nothing, right?

"I do enjoy tea made with apple leaves," I jokingly answered.

Sumia playfully pushed me, "That's not what I meant and you know it!"

I really wish it was.

"Ok, ok," I managed to keep myself from falling over.

Getting back into a thoughtful position, I tried to think of an answer. I couldn't think of anything. There wasn't anything in this world that I've adopted as a hobby. I'm really just a newborn in this world. The littlest of things could make me happy one second and then upset the next.

While I was trying to think of a response to Sumia's question, I noticed something behind her. Correction, there was someone standing behind her. It looked like an old man judging by how he was hunched over.

"Um… Old man," I pointed behind Sumia but she mustn't have noticed.

"You like old men!? T-This! I'm shocked! N-Not that it's bad… just,"Sumia seemed really flustered and was attempting to hide her face with her hands.

I have no such attraction to old men!

I placed both my hands on Sumia's shoulder and spun her around. Pointing to the old man she clearly could see now, I reiterated, "No! Old man!"

"Hello, dearie… My… Aren't you a delectable looking young thing," the old man started to grin.

This old guy isn't who I think he is, is he?

Giving the old man another once over, it started to look like I recognized him more and more. The old man was completely bald and had a long white beard. His clothes looked kind of sage like as well. Not to mention, he was also using a cane to support his body.

I definitely wasn't looking at him through a flat screen anymore, but my eyes knew who this old man was.

What the hell is Old Hubba doing out here?!

That old man had to be Old Hubba. There was no second guessing it.

"Don't be shy! Ah… I'm Old Hubba… Mhm… What's your name?" Old Hubba held out his shaking hand to Sumia.

I don't think she even understood what was going on. She stared at Old Hubba's hand with her own still covering her face.

Reaching around Sumia, I grabbed Old Hubba's hand, "Vincent, pleasure to meet you, Old Hubba."

Old Hubba's face contorted. He let go of my hand and looked surprised, "Ah… Um… You have really strong and firm

hands, Vincent. Oh, and your voice! I didn't know a pretty girl's voice could get that deep!"

You can't be serious. I'm clearly taller than Sumia so he should see me! How bad is this guy's eyesight?!

"Excuse me! I am not the pretty girl," I stepped around Sumia and was starting to feel a bit angry.

Old Hubba stepped back at the sight of me, "Ah! I-I knew that! For… For I foresaw it!"

Sumia calmed down at this point, "You're a fortune teller?"

Old Hubba looked a lot happier when talking to Sumia, "Why yes… I can see the future, darling! B-But that's not why I'm here."

Don't tell me he's here to pick flowers as well...

"I need strong young lads to help find my Einherjar! They've been stolen," Old Hubba was distraught.

"Einherjar?" Sumia didn't look like she knew what Old Hubba was talking about.

I, on the other hand, knew all too well what he was talking about. My knowledge translated to a look of horror on my face that I tried to hide. Despite my best attempts, I was failing.

"Yes, the Einherjar are powerful heroes of times past… Mhm… They're brought back as physical ghosts through the use of cards. Cards that I'm supposed to protect!" Old Hubba patted himself with his hand while still holding himself up with his cane.

"Guess you didn't do a good job," Sumia said with a smile and a laugh.

She does not know the seriousness of this.

"Um… I suppose not… But you need to help me! These entities are incredibly powerful! They could destroy an entire kingdom if they fell into the wrong hands!" Old Hubba pleaded.

"Calm down. We'll help you," I assured him so he wouldn't have a heart attack.

"R-Really? Well… I thought that'd be harder," Old Hubba tried to whisper under his breath.

I had heard what he said, "After we stop these cards, we'll be sure to return them to you."

"Thank you! Ah… You youngins these days sure are-" Old Hubba was mindlessly appraising us when I motioned for him to stop.

"We'll give the cards back as soon as we think you're ready for them again. Wouldn't want you to lose them as soon as we gave them back, now would we?" I finished my bargaining and lowered my hand.

"N-No… Mhm… I suppose not… W-Wait! I'm having a vision!" Old Hubba placed a hand on his forehead and was making a bunch of faces.

I am not listening to whatever he's going to make up.

"Come on, Sumia," I grabbed Sumia and started to pull her away from the senile old man.

"But he was having a vision! We should listen!" Sumia was extremely interested in what Old Hubba was doing.

I continued to pull her away, "We need to go tell the Captain about these cards."

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Sumia and I made it back to the Shepherd's HQ just in time for a meeting of some kind. Chrom and Robin were already formulating a plan while Frederick was hauling various things outside. It looked like we were preparing for war.

What was the next chapter? I can't remember it for the life of me.

Noticing our entrance, Robin waved to me and Sumia, "We have some news. Bad news."

"I have news as well," I approached Chrom and Robin with Sumia opting to go and store away the flowers she picked. She tripped on the way up the stairs.

Chrom's attention peaked, "You have news as well?"

"Yeah, it's complicated and all, but… uh… Do either of you believe in ghosts?" I asked both of them as seriously as I could.

Neither of them knew how to respond to my question. When they both shrugged, I took their action as a no, "Well, you should. There's word of a power that allows heroes of old to come back as… Well, ghosts. Ghosts that do as their masters bid."

Both Chrom and Robin looked shocked. They then exchanged glances and Chrom whispered quietly, "Could it be?"

"It sounds like it, Chrom," Robin replied in a hushed voice.

"Is something wrong?" I was feeling slightly perplexed.

Robin then looked me dead in the eyes, "Maribelle's been captured."

I shuddered at Robin's words, "What?!"

I forgot! Damnit! This literally is the start of war!

Following Robin's seriousness, Chrom added, "They claim she invaded upon Plegia and now they're taking action. That's not the worse of it."

"How bad can it get?!" I felt my heart start to beat faster at the thought of what more could be added.

"Remember our friend Marth? Going by your new information, I think we may be looking at a ghost," Robin explained tapping his chin.

They think Lucina is a ghost?!

"No way! Marth was the Hero King! King! We already know that the other "Marth" is a girl," I tried to point out the flaws in how they were thinking.

Chrom shook his head, "Historians are known to get facts wrong. Marth could in fact have been a girl pretending to be a boy."

Not wanting to get into a history debate, I calmed down, "Why are we even talking about that Marth? What does it have to do with what you were gonna say?"

"The Hero King, or Queen, is supposedly with Plegia's forces," Robin added after taking in a long breath.

No way… I know it can't be Lucina… So that means they're using Einherjar?!

"That can't," I paused thinking of what I should say, "The Marth we know helped us! She got Regna Ferox to help! She wouldn't go help a country that wants war!"

Robin shrugged, "I don't know her reasons either. We'll just have to go and find out."

Chrom didn't wait for me to respond, "Grab all of your gear. We're escorting Emmeryn to the mad king Gangrel to hold a discussion."

Marth… The ghost of the Hero King... It's being used by Plegia. Just when I thought things were getting better.

A bit on the short end, but short to me is about four thousand words I suppose.

Let me be the first to tell you that this chapter made me rake my brain. There was so many ways I could go and I wanted to pull more characters into the limelight rather than keep reusing the same ones over and over again. This resulted in me looking over this chapter with a cold, analyzing eye.

I guess I should go over parts of the chapter in that case. Starting with the magic portion, what do you guys think? All and all, I find bringing real world concepts into a fantasy one to fun to pass up. Of course there's the part of this whole thing that this is a fic and not a science book. I'll try and keep explanations small but understandable. Also, I'm not about to go in depth about the hazards of how a magnetic field might affect one's body if it were to be too strong. This is all for fun and maybe you'll learn something while reading!

Before I forget, we got a name for that bandit leader! Provided by Ilat-2 of course, his name is Ardal! We'll be seeing more of him.

On another note, we have Old Hubba looking for his Einherjar. It seems we know who they ended up with. Now they're heading to war!

On that same topic, what do you guys think about Chrom and Robin thinking Lucina is the Einherjar for Marth. I thought it over and only Lissa would've noticed her coming out of the time gate above. That is, if she wasn't too busy looking at the Risen about to chop her in half. Not to mention the fact that Marth was alive roughly a couple thousand years ago according to Tiki's age. History gets skewed as more and more time passes. There's no real way to prove that Marth was a boy and nobody has anyway of proving Lucina to simply be a person pretending to be Marth at this point. This was all just really how I thought the characters would react to Einherjar if discovered before Lucina's identity reveal.

Anyhow, leave a review on what you think. Be sure to send me a PM with any ideas/questions as well!

Next time we're heading to war!